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AUGUST 2015  
ISSUE 304

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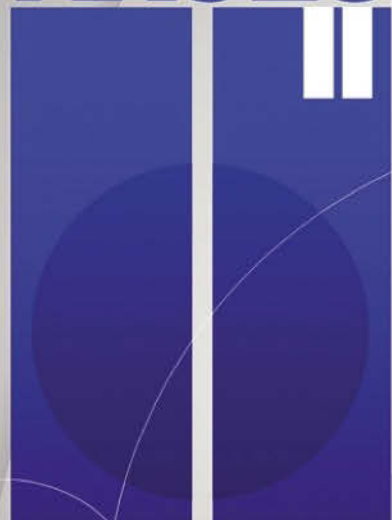


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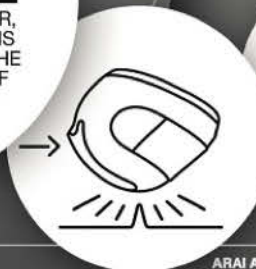
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★ Aprilia RSV4 RF **vs** BMW S 1000 RR  
**vs** Ducati 899 Panigale **vs** Ducati 1299  
Panigale S **vs** Kawasaki H2 **vs** Kawasaki  
ZX-10R **vs** MV Agusta F3 800 **vs** MV Agusta  
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WELCOME



## Worth The Wait

**W**hat a month it's been. It kicked off with us glued to Manx Radio TT (that you've got to say as the jingle), listening to a truly fierce Senior race. McPint's efforts were nothing short of sensational, and it's a measure of the man that he turned his fortnight round so emphatically.

Then all our attentions were drawn to the 2015 Sportsbike of the Year test. It's not a light undertaking, and Beej has been hard at it for months now bringing together the ten contenders, dealing with Europe's best circuit, ordering up the Bridgestone control tyres, getting the logistics bang on and sorting out the weather to deliver the most comprehensive test you'll read anywhere on planet in the most exciting year for sportsbikes that we've ever know.

It was an epic two day test at Portimao, and a fascinating insight into the direction bikes are heading. The strides made by the likes of Yamaha with the stunning YZF-R1M, Ducati with the sensational 1299S and BMW with its ruthlessly efficient S 1000 RR have been huge, but it's not like our four-time winner has been sat waiting for the competition to catch up. No, Aprilia's new RSV4 RF is a belter, but it now faces its most strenuous test to fend off this rabid pack of rivals.

But before you dismiss this extravaganza as an irrelevant techo fest, I'll just let you know that my favourite time on track was on the Triumph Daytona 675R; the 'cheapest', smallest, least powerful and only electronics-free bike on test. It just goes to show you that pure and unmolested ability can still deliver the very best sensations.

Once home, I was rudely brought back to earth by an errant car driver who managed to persuade my fourth and fifth fingers on my left hand to try life as my third and fourth instead. The impact with the car made a right mess of my hand, and my foot is plum coloured, possibly as a result of being run over. My accident was on a blistering hot day, but thanks to wearing full leathers, gloves, boots and a back protector I can type away at home rather than wait for a skin graft or the like if I'd not been wearing my gear.

So, yeah, a funny old month. Here's hoping yours is a good 'un and that summer is delivering biking thrills!

*Rootsy*



24

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# Upfront

PLANET FAST BIKES - NEW METAL, NEWS & REVIEWS

## INDUCING CHANGE

### Has Kawasaki's H2 penned the floodgates for fancy engine configurations?



*Turbos have lagged for 30 years now...*

**T**he last time turbos and 'chargers were big news was back in the days when disco was king. Bikes like Honda's humble CX500 and Yamaha's otherwise nondescript XJ650 had turbos whacked on them in an attempt to boost power and jump on the bandwagon that the car world had begun. So, over 30 years on, could we see a return to the days of forced induction?

Yes, we know the Kawasaki H2 has come along and stated its claim for why superchargers are the next big thing, but even Kawasaki's top brass recognise that the future isn't sticking a blower on a big bike to

generate massive numbers (of anything; power, speed, penalty points, days in jail...). Rather, the future is forced induction on smaller bikes to bring their power up to current supersport-type levels.

Suzuki also has a history with turbocharging, offering the XN85 Turbo (the number in its name referencing its peak power output) from 1983. We also know that Suzuki was interested in this route a while ago when the original B-King concept came fitted with a supercharger. Suzuki ultimately thought that a normally aspirated Hayabusa engine would do for this nutty naked, but

clearly there are engineers within the factory who have kept an interest in the idea. The unveiling of the Recursion concept model two years ago is evidence of this, a 588cc two cylinder bike that would offer near GSX-R750 performance from its turbo unit, all packaged up in a slim and lightweight chassis, harking back to the days when turbos were all the rage.

Recent patent applications from Suzuki show how serious the Hamamatsu factory is in the project, with drawings in the forms showing the turbocharger mounted on the exhaust downtubes. Other points of note is the massive air scoop to feed the motor, a single-sided swingarm offering a long wheelbase and a half faired design to help heat dissipation better.

So why isn't everyone forcing induction? Well, as the H2 shows the engineering challenges are stiff, there's lots of additional weight and control isn't as finessed. Turbos also offer these traits, but also encounter another problem - lag. This is a fundamental problem with turbos, as they depend on being fed by exhaust gasses that naturally have to go through the suck, squeeze, bang, blow cycle first. The car world uses nitrous oxide, higher compression ratios, wastegates or sequential turbos to deal with lag, options of limited use to motorcycles. So how Suzuki, and others, deal with this will be the key to this renaissance of turbo charging.



*Patents have been filed by Suzuki...*



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# THE GRID OF NEWS

Who's qualified where in this month's news race?

## WIN A SET OF TT WINNING TYRES!

■ We've got the rear Metzeler tyre of Ian Hutchinson's superstock winning TT Kawasaki ZX-10R to give away – and if you don't manage to win those, then you could still grab James Hillier's rear... slick from his third place in the Senior race. These are tyres that have done fantastic speed around the Island, and both are signed by the men themselves. For a chance to win some can't-be-bought memorabilia from the 2015 TT, then all you need to do is head to the competitions section of [motorcyclmonthy.co.uk](http://motorcyclmonthy.co.uk) and keep your fingers crossed!

## CALLING ALL CANNONBALLERS!

■ Time is running out if you want to sign yourself up on the 2015 Cannonball Run. This year's event departs from Vienna in Austria on the 26th of September and then winds its way along some of the most stunning roads in Europe for the next week until the Oktoberfest heaves into view the following Friday. It promises to be an epic Euro-blast. It'll cost new Cannonballers £1,999 which includes everything apart from getting there and back, recovery and medical insurance, fuel, booze and snacks. Head to [www.cannonballism.com](http://www.cannonballism.com) for info.

## GOING DUTCH?

■ From next year, the one Saturday aberration on the MotoGP calendar will be annulled with the news that the Dutch TT race will be held on a Sunday from 2016 onwards. The move was made to garner more media exposure in an increasingly competitive world, with fan numbers expected to increase with the event happening over the full two days of the weekend. This ends the tradition that started in 1925, and as the oldest race on the GP calendar, marks a break from the eccentric date. [www.ttcircuit.com](http://www.ttcircuit.com)

Assen about next year?



## GIXXER CUP

■ On hearing about the new Gixxer Cup, we rejoiced. Then we learned that it was happening in India, so we lost interest. Then we thought about it again – mad Indian loons on GSX-R600s or the like bombing round tracks – and our interest was piqued once more. But it turns out that the bike being raced is the 83,859 Rupee Suzuki Gixxer 155 SF (that's about £850!), and we weren't that bothered. But then we thought about it again, and this is the way to build brands, inspire loyalty, offer great entertainment and generate stars of the future. The bikes look sweet, the action is, er, varied, but investment like this is to be celebrated! Top job Suzuki!

Get ready for an Indian take out!



## DR. JOHN HINDS

■ It is with the heaviest of hearts that we report the death of Dr. John Hinds, one of the revered flying doctors that provided crucial medical service for the Irish road racing scene. The 35-year-old from Tandragee was supporting the racing at Skerries near Dublin in early July when the incident happened. Dr. John saved so many lives in his role on track, and was hugely respected in his day job as a consultant in Craigavon hospital in County Armagh. The sport owes him so much, and to repay his tireless efforts we'd urge you to support his campaign for an air ambulance service in Northern Ireland.



Dr. John. Legend.

## LIVE AND KICKING

■ Yes, we know that you're on your summer holidays and a day out in a draughty hall in Birmingham is far from your mind, but tickets are now on sale for the 2015 Motorcycle Live event, being held this year from 28th November to 6th December. Tickets go on sale on the 3rd of August, but if you enter a competition to win tickets then you could be going there for free. Head to [www.motorcycellive.co.uk](http://www.motorcycellive.co.uk) for more details.



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# Where there's muck, there's fast...

If motocross makes road riders quicker, than the TT had better watch out for our Charlie next year!

**G**iven the strength of KTM's off-road pedigree any school or experience connected with the Austrian brand would need to be properly on the money. So when the invite came to visit the Route34 Motopark in Winchester to try the KTM MX Experience day you're expecting it to be good – and in no way does it disappoint.

The school may have the backing of KTM, but the experience is a family business with Barry Johnson at the helm. So after a brief bit of riding to check our riding ability, and that we met the stipulations of the course (being over 4ft 8ins and able to balance on a two wheeled bike), we were split into three groups.

We initially headed out on restricted KTM Freerides to get used to the feel of the middle circuit. This is a tame intro for the first couple of laps, but soon you're encouraged to ride at your pace, with ample room for the first timers, the should-be-betters (like myself) and the experienced flyers.

The second group ride was on the full circuit, opening up two table tops, with a seriously fast left hander between them heading into another left berm

and up to the top of what Barry lovingly named Dead Man's Hill. It was daunting from afar, but once up it and down it, it became less of an obstacle and more the centrepiece of an incredible track.

To this point we had been mostly sitting down, a few of us were up on our haunches and having done a few hare and hounds I thought I was pretty handy off of the seat. Barry quickly let it be known that I was doing everything wrong; not leaning forward enough, legs not straight enough and not re-gripping. Barry knew I could take the criticism, and I was there to improve. Barry instinctively knew what instructions were right for me, an instinct that has been nurtured with almost 30 years of teaching experience – and years of international racing.

Another stand-up full-track session passed and it was time for lunch, before getting back to it and trying to keep the food down. Liking a challenge, I reached for an unrestricted 350 SF and got all I had hoped for; a bike that relished a handful driving off the corners and maximising on the grip provided by the school's chosen Dunlop Geomax MX 52 tyres.



*Charlie was put in detention for his crashing antics...*



*Barry on teaching 'giving it The Barry'*

This bike was so good I must have impressed as the offer came in the next session to try Barry's 450. Feeling the extra power immediately I nursed her round two laps until telling myself not to be such a Jessie, grabbed handful of throttle, and promptly feasted on dirt. Second instructor, Chris Northwood, whispered, "Nice one, you're the first person to ever bin the boss's bike." Level found, luck pushed, back to the 350 for me.

All involved had a great day, the weather was perfect, but had it hammered down I am sure it would have been no less enjoyable. Thus, whether you are a seasoned off road rider that wants to come and try a new KTM pre-purchase (with the bonus of getting a few tips along the way), a group after a good crack or indeed a road rider that wants to enhance your skills then the KTM Motocross School is well worth a visit.

The day costs £185 and that includes use of the bike, fuel, kit loan and drinks throughout the day – you just need to bring your lunch (and keep it down). For more information and for venues around the UK head to [www.ktmmxexperience.co.uk](http://www.ktmmxexperience.co.uk)

## NEXT MONTH: SUZUKI GSX-S1000F LAUNCHED

Plus: First UK ride on the new Aprilia Tuono 1100 V4 RR, how to build a BSB bike, Victory goes electric, the best budget bikes you can buy, and lots, lots more!







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# Moto Photo

The nation's tallest moto photo-er (and that's a tough competition to be in), gives us the low down on snapping at Silverstone, pre MotoGP...

I wish I could just flip reverse this image. Running left-to-right, the edge of the Wing building's roof would serve as a graphic to chart the progress of the rider's skills as they skim the track below, going through the sessions at the California Superbike School. As it is, our convention of reading in one direction makes this a simple picture of Rootsy being shadowed by his CSS coach as they ride by Silverstone's newly completed landmark pit complex early in 2012.

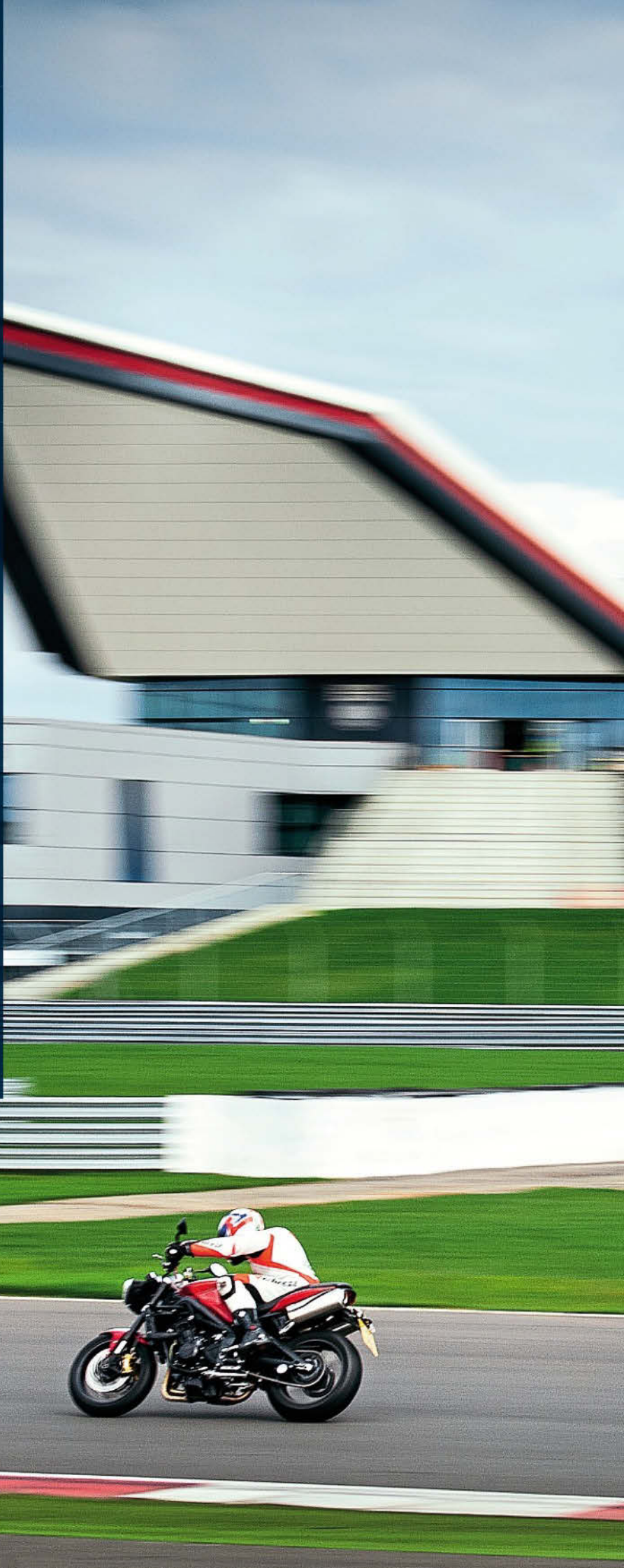
Snappers don't have an easy time here. There aren't many places that yield traditional strong images and getting from one to the next is a huge faff. The resident photographer took pity and lent me a 1.7x teleconverter so at least I had another shot option at each spot, and a few yards

from here I could also do the long shot that filled the main spread of the feature.

It's a popular place to shoot from. There must be thousands of people with a picture of themselves or a loved one riding or driving past one of the most recognisable bits of UK motorsport scenery. It's easy to overlook that it combines two of the main strengths of photography – here's a pretty picture, and this is the story of that day of my life.

With a bit of leg work a landscape with your mate/dad/sister riding through it will reveal itself at most tracks, and is easily done with a bit of zoom on a phone or pocket camera. Meanwhile, you could hold this spread up to a mirror and imagine the roof as a graph of skill level over time, or if that's boring, a take-off ramp for the ultimate thrill ride...

Nikon D2x, 50mm, 1/100th sec at f11, ISO 100.









UPFRONT

# FENDS

WORLD  
**GP** BIKE  
LEGENDS

## World GP Bike LEGENDS

Stars from GP's 'Golden Era' dusted off their leathers and fired up those evil smokers for a blast around Jerez. How could we resist?





# THE RACE OF

EVENT

**T**he first ever World GB Bike Legends festival took place at Jerez in the glorious Spanish sun over the 19-21 June, and we were there to smell the two-stroke, talk to and adulate the Legends, and watch some Golden Era racing at this unique event. The big hitters to draw the crowds were Freddie Spencer, Wayne Gardner, Christian Sarron and Kevin Schwantz, but real legendary status was splattered all over the grid with seven-times world champion Phil Read, Angel Nieto and Didier de Radigues, to name but a few. Cue the blue smoke!

Gardner took the opening honours on Saturday with Didier de Radigues and Schwantz in second and third respectively. The near 40-degree heat was brutal and looking at the condition of the riders at the podium

celebrations reminded us how hard a 160kg, 180bhp two-stroke animal is to muscle around Jerez. It didn't stop de Radigues, who still looks like a rock star, getting a full complement of kisses from the podium girls. I guess it's been a while! Were they bashing fairings and sliding the rear ends to the edge of a high side? No, and you wouldn't expect them to; the (priceless and irreplaceable) machinery and the riders are in a different place now. However, the sound of a grid full of 500s blasting down the straightaway is more than enough to raise the hairs on the back of your neck...

WORDS: IAN PERRYMENT

PICS: IAN PERRYMENT & WORLD GP LEGENDS







Our very own Steve Parrish was out there as well but an overheating Suzuki put paid to any assault on the podium. He said a 'piston broke', which he said was like his life, pissed and, well, you get the idea...

Spencer won the second race, but lost out to Schwantz in race three. They had a good scrap, to the delight of the crowd, and the nostalgia fest was completed with Kevin hoisting the stars and stripes on the warm down lap. Spencer, in full HRC Rothmans

leathers, was noticeably missing a Honda between his legs and made do with a YZR500. We learnt at the press conference that parts for the 500s are an issue, many are privately owned, and something the festival organisers are addressing for future events.



Schwantz had no machine issues, the RGV500 was looking and sounding mega. He kept everyone happy by pulling some monster wheelies down the start finish straight. The paddock access was incredible with all the stars mingling with crowds, signing autographs

and genuinely enjoying the event as much as the fans. Stunt/trials shows, vintage two-strokes on display and a paddock bar kept fans entertained in between races with Toseland and Bonnie Tyler keeping things going at night. There was no total eclipse, mind...



The podium was set up behind the team garages in the paddock, and post-race the riders walked through the crowds for the presentations. Gardner was visibly delighted to be wearing a winner's wreath again after race one and Christian Sarron had an excuse to end all others for not keeping up with his fellow legends – eating too much breakfast!



Spencer had the whole event summed up perfectly, "I saw a couple of young guys in the paddock and they said 'thank you so much for doing this and allowing us to see you live', and it struck a chord." We couldn't agree more, Freddie. Dates and locations aren't confirmed for 2016 yet, but it's got our thumbs up. If you want to make a week of it and bang around the Andalusian roads (the road to Ronda, anyone?), it's a winner in our books!







# Get £750 worth of Ducati Apparel and/or Accessories...

...free when purchasing a new 899 Panigale\*

Superbike performance available with affordable\*\* monthly repayments.

## Representative Example:

Based on 899 Panigale in Red with a contracted annual mileage of 6,000.

36 Monthly Repayments	£139.00	Cash Price	£12,931.00
Final Repayment	£6,591.00	Deposit	£3,215.00
Total Amount Payable	£14,810.00	Total Amount of Credit	£9,716.00
Interest Rate (Fixed)	7.41%	Purchase Fee <sup>§</sup>	£10.00
Representative APR	7.7% APR	Duration of Agreement	37 Months

<sup>§</sup> Included in Final Repayment.

\* Free £750 (inclusive of VAT) Ducati Performance Voucher to spend in-store on Ducati accessories and/or clothing, available when purchasing a new Ducati 899 Panigale in either Red or Arctic White between 15th June – 30th September 2015. Bikes must be registered before 30th September 2015.

\*\*With a PCP product a significant proportion of the total amount payable is payable at the end of the contract by one large final repayment, so your regular monthly repayments are low. Credit is subject to status and is only available to UK residents aged 18 or over. TriOptions PCP is only available through Ducati Finance which is a trading style of Black Horse Ltd, St. William House, Tresillian Terrace, Cardiff CF10 5BH. Figures are correct as of 1st July 2015. Finance offer ends 30th September 2015.



# Gearred Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

## ALPINESTARS: T-GP R AIR JACKET

Well ventilated textile jackets are just the ticket for non-nutty riding in the summer. This Alpinestars number uses an abrasion resistant 450 denier poly-fabric that uses mesh panels in the right places to ensure you don't end up looking like a fig at the end of your ride. There's lightweight CE certified protection at the

elbow and shoulder, while the chest and back have compartments that are currently filled with PE foam padding, but can be upgraded to more substantial protection. Neoprene collar and cuffs make it comfortable to wear, while a lower rear profile keeps the jacket from riding up. Nice stuff from the 'Stars.

£219.99

[www.alpinestars.com](http://www.alpinestars.com)



## OXFORD PRODUCTS: MAGNETO

If you've got less than a tenner to spend this month, then you won't do better than spending it on one of these magnetic workshop trays. You won't believe how handy these trays are. Start undoing stuff on your bike and stick the steel stuff in one of these and you won't be pulling your hair out trying to find out where it's gone by the time it's ready to be put back together. Plus the magnet is rubberised so as not to scratch anything. If you've got lots to take off, go for the 15cm dish. Not so much? There's a 10cm version for ya!



£4.99/£7.99

[www.oxprod.com](http://www.oxprod.com)

## DRIFT: GHOST S

Everyone likes a price cut, especially when it's off fancy kit – like this all-singing, all-dancing Drift camera. The Ghost-S is a beauty, and is Drift's most powerful unit. It uses a Sony CMOS sensor and can record in 1080p at 60fps, which should produce some stunning results. Still images are captured at up to 12MP. The battery has a life of 3.5 hours and it comes with a scratch resistant LCD screen. It was 329.99, but now comes in at £249.99!



£249.99

[www.nevis.uk.com](http://www.nevis.uk.com)

## SDOC100: DRY LUBE

Dry lube sounds a bit of an oxymoron, but the clever Germans at the SDoc factory have been busy concocting a new formula of chain lube. The thinking behind this new product is that traditional oil-based lubes trap muck and causes a mess, while a dry lube won't do either. This Dry Lube is designed to run deep into the chain, while there's an anti corrosion additive included. Add the fact it's transparent and you've got a top product. At £15.99, it's not cheap, but this is good stuff and can save you a stack in a longer lasting chain.



£15.99

[www.motohaus.com](http://www.motohaus.com)

## CNC RACING: RPS REARSETS

Made in Italy for an Italian bike, these CNC Racing rearsets are absolutely lovely. So if you're after a set for your Panigale because you're finding that your boots slip off the standard pegs, then check out these lush ones. These rearsets are machined out of one

block of AL 7075 T6 aluminium and can be adjusted in all sorts of ways. The gearshift and brake lever can be adjusted -20mm/+15mm, so you should find a happy position there somewhere. They'll also work with the bike in race shift gear pattern.



£675.00

[www.cncracing.it](http://www.cncracing.it)



## HJC: RPHA10+ LORENZO REPLICA

■ Though Jorge Lorenzo had a one-off incident with his HJC helmet at the start of the year at Qatar (some liner dropped down to impair his vision, not good when you're racing at night), Spanish George now seems to have found his mojo and has had no incidents with his HJC lid. This 2015 rep is made from a three mix shell construction – carbon fibre, aramid and fibreglass – to give strength and lightness in spades. Air flow is well managed with top ventilation throughout, while the visor locking system is a clever addition to control air coming into the lid. Rootsy has been wearing a RPHA10+ recently, though not in these colours, and can't say enough good things about the fit and comfort of the lid. It's quiet, too. So when you factor in the price, you're getting a load of lid for your hard earned.

£449.99

[www.oxprod.com](http://www.oxprod.com)



## TCX: S-SPEED



■ Half the price of the top of the range boots, TCX's S-Speed is a great option at the £150 mark. Using an internal fastening system, you get a great fit and quality safety as the boot hugs the contours of your feet well. Then you zip yourself in via the side-entry system and you're ready to go. There's plenty of reinforcement on the outer, with a PU heel guard, shin plate and shift pad. The Torsion Control System helps to protect the ankle, and there's also an ankle impact slider. With a plush inner, there's plenty to get yourself stuck into here at a price we like.

£149.99

[www.nevis.uk.com](http://www.nevis.uk.com)

## ARC ON: COMPETIZIONE GLOVE



■ This kangaroo constructed mitt has the benefit of also using stingray skin to double up the protection in vulnerable areas. Away from animal skin, there is titanium and carbon knuckle armour. To close, there is a triple closure system. With pre-curved fingers, the finger bridge and stretch leather in all the right places, it's a great specced glove for the money.

FROM £140.00

[www.arc.com](http://www.arc.com)

## GIVI 50 4: SNIPER

■ Can't afford the HJC? Not a fan of Jorge? How about this new Givi lid? It's cheap as chips, mainly as it's made from a technopolymer material, cheaper than more exotic materials. On the inside, there's a removable liner and three vents ensure that comfort remains good for when it gets warm. The Sniper has a sun visor, nose guard and wind deflector, so all in it offers great value at under £85.



£84.90

[www.givi.co.uk](http://www.givi.co.uk)

## VR46: FLEECE

■ If you want to blend in while sat in a MotoGP crowd, then you need to be wearing some official VR46 gear. Yellow will ensure that you don't stick out like a sore thumb, and there's plenty of this colour in the official clothing range of the GOAT. Rossi has built up a substantial empire beyond the racetrack, and given the swathes of supporters in his gear on every MotoGP race weekend, it's fair to say he's got a decent pot to sit on in his old age. This fleece does all it should, and is priced on par with manufacturer gear.



£70.00

[www.vr46.it](http://www.vr46.it)

## TECHNOTRONIC RACING: AUTO BLIPPER

■ 2015 is the year that downshift blippers became all the rage. Previously the preserve of full spec race bikes, this function is now appearing all over the showroom, with the BMW S 1000 RR, Ducati Panigale 1299 and any 2015 MV Agusta being blessed with this top tech. So instead of having to blip the throttle on downshifts (to better marry the new revs of a lower gear ratio), a little gizmo does it for you. If you can't afford a new bike, fear not, as for the price of a monthly payment for a 2015 machine, you can get a downshift blipper for your bike. Easy to install, tiny on the bike and a riding aid, you really won't get bored of these excellent systems.



£245

[www.bikehps.com](http://www.bikehps.com)



# Gearred Up

ALL THE LATEST, COOLEST & TRICKEST PERFORMANCE PRODUCTS

## HARWOOD PERFORMANCE SOURCE

Founded in 1999 – and originally a subsidiary of a family business trading since 1955 – HPS has become one of the best known high-performance motorcycle upgrade retail and distribution brands, both UK and worldwide.

From small beginnings we are proud to have built our reputation based around excellent service and product knowledge, combined with competitive prices.

Virtually every product we supply – whether from a simple upgrade to high performance brake pads, through to a full electronic system, or lighter, stronger wheels – we will have chosen after extensive testing and use on long-distance road tours, track days or while we're racing.

If you're looking for the best products combined with best advice and service, please call us today!



### EBC GPFX SINTERED COMPOUND RACE/TRACK ONLY PADS

■ EBC GPFX Sintered Compound Race/Track only pads. From £54 per caliper (at present HPS have an exclusive "buy two calipers get two more free" offer with full performance money-back-guarantee). After years of research and development EBC have introduced this totally new all weather breakthrough race compound which had been designed to outperform all other track-only pads.

- Instant unbeatable stopping power – even from cold
- Extreme high temperature fade resistance
- Superb feel and feedback at the brake lever
- Minimum 'in-stop' friction/retardation variation
- Compatible with original or aftermarket steel discs
- Quickly usable – minimal bedding in time required
- Lowest pad wear and disc rotor abrasion levels



FROM £54

### BST GP-WINNING, PREPREG CARBON FIBRE WHEELS...

The all carbon fibre motorcycle wheel from BlackStone Tek, produced using the latest technology, materials and aerospace manufacturing processes – in a single moulding process for seamless strength.

Because these wheels offer a substantial reduction in flywheel and gyroscopic effects, the motorcycle can accelerate, corner and brake faster. In particular, the reduced gyroscopic effect allows for much faster directional changes, which makes the motorcycle far more sensitive to the rider's demands.

Lower rotational inertia results in all-round performance gains including...

- quicker and more responsive steering
- increased acceleration (equivalent to as much as +9bhp)
- improved braking performance
- much less rider fatigue
- Lower unsprung mass provides better tyre grip and reduced tyre wear
- Durability – carbon fibre is a fatigue-free material
- Robustness – carbon fibre is a damage tolerant material
- Longevity – carbon fibre is corrosion and fatigue-free
- Attractiveness – lacquered woven finish gives the wheels a killer look!



FROM ONLY £2187 FOR SUPERBIKE/SUPERSPORT SIZES (HONDA MSX125 FROM ONLY £998)

### BAZZAZ Z-Fi TC FUEL CONTROL MODULE



With Intelligent Quickshifter & Traction Control. Minimise the risk of high-sides with traction control technology from the highest levels of professional racing, now for all track-day riders and racers.

#### 3 FUNCTIONS ALL-IN-ONE MODULE...

- Plug-&-play traction control
- Integrated intelligent programmable quickshifter for full-throttle clutchless upshifting
- Fuel injection commander

Brings traction control technology from the highest levels of professional racing to all track-day riders and racers.

- State of the art traction control for faster lap times and increased safety
- Adjustable by Throttle Position, RPM and Gear for optimal performance under all riding conditions
- Utilises Moto GP strain gauge technology - no moving parts to break or wear out
- Intuitive PC Software for easy tuning
- Plug-and-play - uses bike's stock sensors - no complex installation

FROM £593

### HEL PERFORMANCE MOTORCYCLE BRAKE LINE KITS

#### OFFICIAL BRAKE LINES OF THE BRITISH SUPERBIKES CHAMPIONSHIP

HEL brake lines are fully approved for road and race use and come with a lifetime guarantee.

HPS's complete front & rear sheathed kits provide absolutely everything you need to upgrade your brake lines including:

- Stainless Steel Banjo Bolts
- 3, 4 (or more with ABS) Stainless Braided Brake Lines
- Rubber Grommets (where required) to safely mount the lines using your bike's original guide brackets
- Protectively Sheathed Stainless Steel Lines to protect your paintwork and fairing with choice of Clear or Coloured finishes
- Manufactured to FMVSS-106 Standards
- TUV, DOT, ADR & LTSA approved
  - HPS includes FREE 0.5L High Quality Motul Brake Fluid (with all UK mainland orders)



FROM £69



## MRA: THE WORLD'S FIRST DOUBLE BUBBLE RACING SCREEN

This unique screen type has been developed by MRA at the request of leading race teams looking for a way of reducing air resistance and drag.

Champions including Tom Sykes, Esteve Rabat, Max Biaggi and many others have had victories on bikes equipped with MRA Double-Bubble Racing screens.

MRA motorcycle screens are manufactured from a unique and specially developed material and are:

- Shock resistant and shatterproof – to minimise the chance of breakage from the impact of stone chips, etc.
- Rigid – to retain its shape and avoid distortion
- Safer – in extreme circumstances should it break, edges aren't sharp
- Resistant to most chemicals
- UV (sunlight) resistant – for at least 10 years to avoid dulling or clouding
- Second to none in style, fit and finish
- Raster black gradient finish at front base of screen (on most bikes) to conceal and protect rear of instrument panel from strong sunlight
- Special grey rear edge beaded safety trim (not shown in all photos)

**FROM £54**



## DYMAC ULTRA PRO UP7X FORGED ALUMINIUM, 7 SPOKE

The Ultra Pro UP7X range of custom motorcycle wheels are the lightest aluminium wheels Dymag have ever developed. With lightening holes and a tweaked spoke design over previous versions of the UP7 wheel, the UP7X performs in both road and race applications.

- New tweaked spoke design with lightening holes
- Available for most aftermarket road bike applications including Honda Fireblade, Suzuki GSX-R, Ducati 916, Kawasaki ZX7R, Yamaha YZF-R1, etc.
- Supplied ready to fit, complete with sprockets, cush-drives (except single-sided swing arm versions) and valves, and where required disc carriers
- Tested to JWL, DOT and BS AU 50 standards and certified for race and road use (please note some other brands of magnesium wheels are race only and may not be durable enough for road use) in USA, UK and Japan
- Wide range of colours available

**£1650**



## BREMBO SC HIGH PERFORMANCE RACE & ROAD FRONT BRAKE PADS

Road approved Sintered Compound for race, track-day and road use, with a particularly high friction coefficient when both cold and hot (between cold 0.76 Mu/COF warm/hot 0.79/81).

As this material stays very stable in all temperature conditions and, specifically, has a strong friction coefficient when cold, this race material is also particularly suitable for the highest-performance road use (which many other carbon based race pads are not, due to them requiring a warm-up period).

- Unlike many supposed 'high-performance' pads, this SC compound is extremely kind to your costly discs
  - Provides a particularly high coefficient of friction for excellent initial bite when cold, with superb fade resistance and feel/modulation when hot, working in both wet and dry conditions
  - Special and unique initial swept-surface finish layer, to enable rapid bedding-in; i.e. no laborious disc pre-cleaning required

**FROM £22.98/CALIPER**



## NITRON NTR RACE-PRO REAR SHOCK ABSORBER

■ Available for a limited range of the latest commonly raced Sportsbikes, the Race-Pro's enormous 46mm Piston creates a massively increased area for the damper mechanism to operate within for a finer range of adjustments, and even higher levels of fade resistance for on-track race length or track day endurance.

- Manufactured with a hard-anodised corrosion-resistant aluminium alloy CNC machined body using the highest quality internal components
- Manual preload adjustment with c-spanner included, or...
- Optional Hydraulic Remote Preload Adjuster System (HPA) for quick changes to rear ride-height to vary steering response between road and track (also ideal for shorter riders or from solo to with pillion & luggage)
- Adjustable/increasable length as standard
- Very light weight
- Low friction rose jointed eyes where applicable (bike-dependent end fittings may differ from those shown here)
- Separate compression and rebound damping adjustment for more advanced bike setup
- 3rd piston Shim-Stack for very low speed rebound damping control
- Teflon lined low-friction rose jointed eyes where applicable (bike-dependent end fittings may differ from those shown here)



## GIPRO DIGITAL GEAR INDICATOR

GiPro – the leading gear indicator, enables you to always know what gear you're in, on Road or Track

- The most rapid gearchange display response possible for your bike
- Clear and bright, daylight readable indication
- Choice of display colours – red recommended for brightest display
- Small size, neat design
- Easiest possible installation on your bike
- Extreme reliability with two-year replacement warranty

Plus... avoid the irritating "changing in to 7th" syndrome!



**FROM £99.97**



# 2015 SPORTS BI

The ten best sportsbikes in the world go head-to-head at one of the world's best circuits, Fast Bikes style. It doesn't get any better than this...





IN ASSOCIATION WITH **BRIDGESTONE**

# KE OF THE YEAR

WORDS: FAGAN PICS: GAWLER





**P**ut simply, there isn't another test quite like the Fast Bikes' Sportsbike of the Year shindig; not one as comprehensive, as thorough, as impartial or as respected the world over as SBOTY. The ten best sportsbikes available for public consumption scrap it out between themselves on an even playing field; and, once again, that field is Portimao.

While 2014 wasn't exactly lacking in sexy sportsbikes, the decision to take 'just' eight bikes on the trip was due to guaranteeing SBOTY remained a place for the elite only, with no stragglers or token entries making up the numbers. 2015, however, is a very different story; there's an onslaught of radical new metal to compliment the established protagonists.

The application criteria for every Sportsbike of the Year centres around new models, class leaders, and the existing cream from previous crops. We have World Superbike rules to thank for this year's all-new techno queens. Tighter engine tuning means manufacturers have to release decent power straight from the crate in order to compete, hence the sudden rush at the tail end of last season to unleash the ponies.

Major updates to the Aprilia RSV4 – resulting in the limited edition RF model – has ensured Leon Haslam can run at the front of WSB, and the Aprilia has a fighting chance of recapturing the SBOTY title for the fifth year on the bounce. BMW has also tinkered with the S 1000 RR; more power, chassis tweaks and revised electronics. But is a better road bike as effective on track?


Though not featuring on WSB's grid (yet), the Yamaha YZF-R1M was built with one thing in mind – racing. Aside from one other machine on the grid, the R1M is the only ground-up, nut and bolt, all-new steed, and was the talk of 2015 on its release in Milan. Conversely, there are several bikes that don't conform to racing regulations, but still boast monumental levels of gizmos. We have Kawasaki to thank for the supercharged H2 (testing the H2R, which wasn't available, or road legal, is pretty pointless) and Ducati for sharpening the Panigale with the overbored 1299.

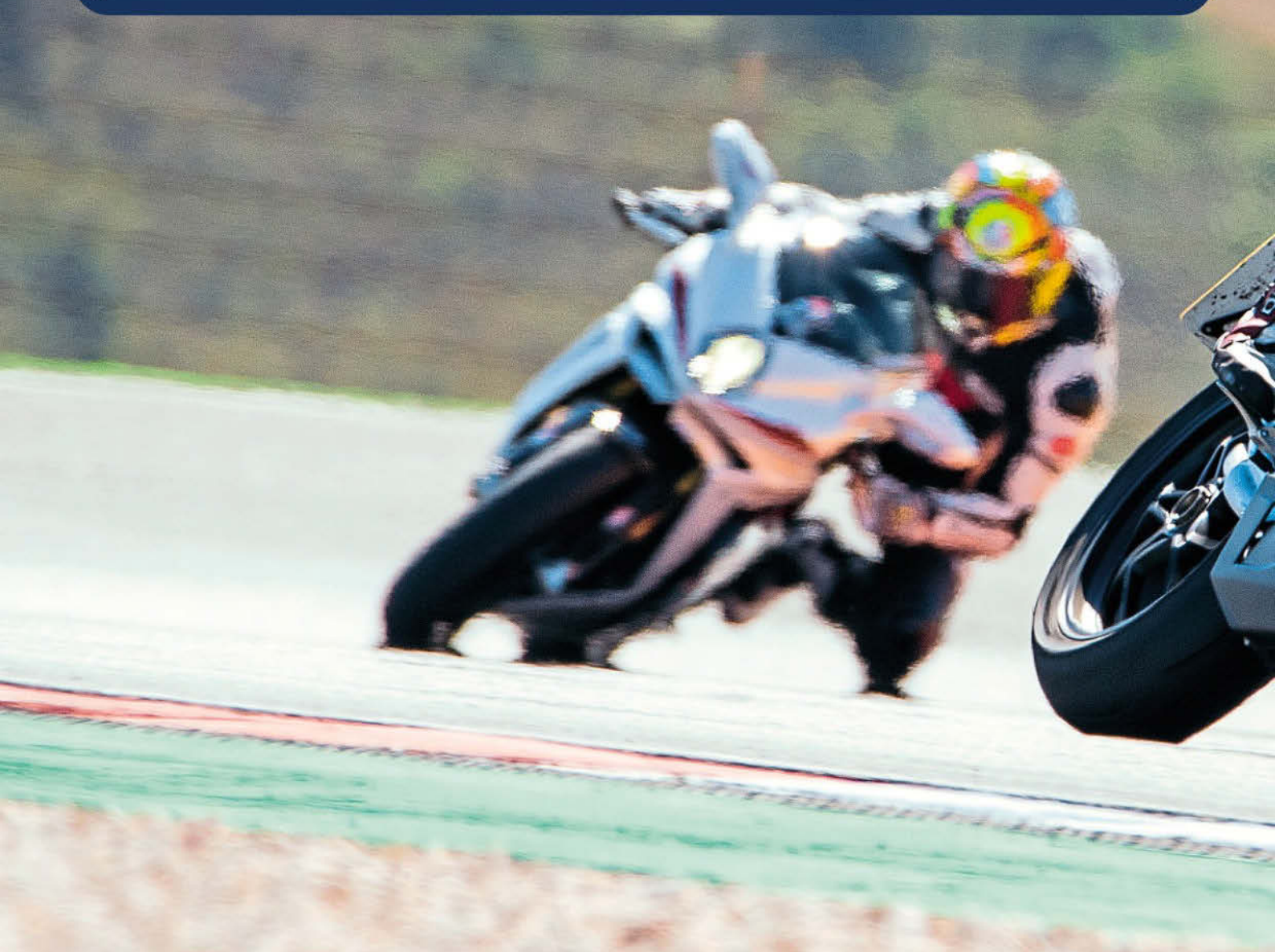
Joining the rest of the litre bikes is the Kawasaki ZX-10R, which was the best 1000cc that Japan can offer since its release in 2011. We've also thrown in a bit of a wildcard in MV Agusta's F4 RR to

round up the big boys brigade.

Representing the middleweight clan is a trio of European bikes; none of which own a four-pot motor. Triumph's Daytona 675R remains unchanged, but is still firmly ahead of its '600cc' rivals. MV Agusta's F3 800 and Ducati's 899 Panigale complete the 10-bike rout, getting the nod as middleweight leaders and truly class acts.

Before the haters hate, there was simply no room for the good old Honda Fireblade, SP or otherwise. Not even John McGuinness's lap record antics at the TT could convince us, nor Hutchy's speed on the R6 come to that. And, just to reiterate, when we're ripping into a bike here, amid the 10 best in the world, it's because we've spent two days constantly lapping them on a control tyre and are comparing them with the very best machines out there. Unlike elsewhere, the only agenda we have is to discover the best bike you can buy.

Once again, we've teamed-up with Bridgestone to ensure a fair test, with each of the ten bikes kitted with ace R10 rubber. And, once again, we're thrashing the best bikes in the world at one of the best circuits in the world – Portimao. It doesn't get any better... 





Hello sailors!



## BRITTANY FERRIES

If you like pounding big miles, or even if you don't, Brittany Ferries is one of the best and most relaxing ways to get to France or Spain. If Spain is your thing, you get nearly a whole day, and often a night, on one of their fully stacked ships to eat, drink and be merry before your biking holiday begins. The cabins are excellent and well equipped, staff very helpful and the evening's entertainment is always, er, entertaining! You can book in groups or alone should you be going solo, and we've used their services for years now, getting our stamp of approval time and again. Even our bikes have always been well looked after when we've ridden across, like some did for this year's SBOTY event. So, if you want to take some big miles off your trip to Spain, or just want to get to France quickly, but in relative luxury, head to the website and see if they can accommodate your plans. We promise you won't regret it!

■ [www.brittany-ferries.co.uk](http://www.brittany-ferries.co.uk)





# BMW S1000RR

**H**aving trawled across half of Europe on the way to Portimao with BJ piloting, you'd think a few laps of a circuit would be the last of the BMW's worries. Not so. A few shakedown laps revealed chronic vibration from the RR's botto, which later manifested into terminal (for the test) issues. What was initially thought to be a rear wheel bearing failure turned out to be a swingarm pivot shimmy, and not even the glorious electronic suspension could conceal the problem. No time set. Sad faces all round. Sprechen sie dick?

Which is a shame, as we were looking forward to dissecting 2015's changes, although I don't think a lap time would've seen the RR climb upon the podium and truly challenge the elite. More power, racier geometry and updated electronics are among the veritable smorgasbord of alterations, and the bike mesmerised at the world press launch at Montebelco in Spain. Even sportier electronic aids, launch control, a pit lane limiter (epic for making 30mph zones bearable) and 188bhp at the wheel guarantees the BMW, along with the R1, owns the most comprehensive gadget pack ever made.

Road-only assessments would see the Beemer in pole position. Cruise control, heated grips and the ability to disguise running over road kill with an inexplicably plush set-up are

useless qualities on track – I mean, since when has it been OK to stick a bike in cruise control and skin up a fatty at a trackday?

But I'm not the only one who's not entirely convinced of the BMW's revised semi-active suspension on track. Ridden at anything below 75 per cent of the S1K's capabilities, it'll perform beautifully and never hinder. Push harder and ask questions of either end (especially the front), however, and it's as if there's too much oil in the forks, limiting the full stroke being utilised and emitting an awkward mid-core feel. The grip is there, you just

have to trust it, but the front rides too high, confidence is lost, much sobbing was heard...

Serious racers will remove the standard suspension (whether it's electronic or conventional), so we can see why BMW has shifted its performance parameters towards a road bias. 2015's set-up is softer, more pliable, and favours bump management over flawless poise. During the limited laps we experienced at Portimao, the BMW did a grand job of flattening the iffy surface.

Very much like the Kawasaki, but to a lesser degree, the RR lacks the race bike dynamics of the R1M and Aprilia. The added flex for 2015, again, makes a better road bike, but that smidgen of composure is missing when chasing tenths. It's also a little too easy, having to trust the computerised grip levels; traction control backs up the shock

constantly searching for grip, leaving you twisting the tube harder and sooner.

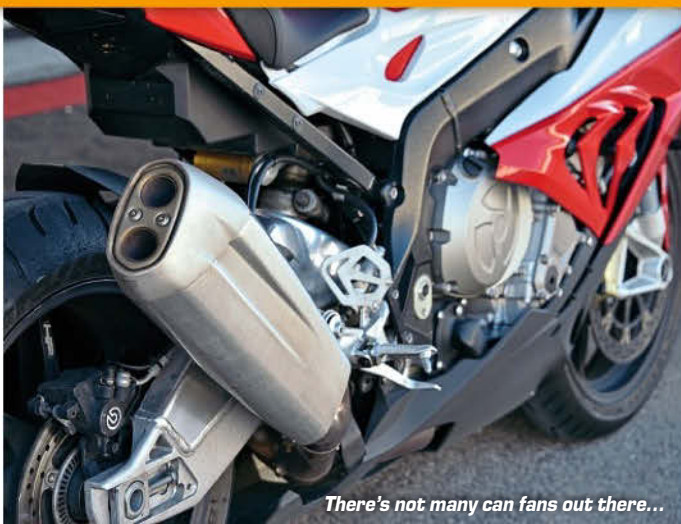
Giving a genuine 188bhp at the back wheel, the 2015 RR is the most powerful (normally aspirated) production motor we've seen on the dyno. Its smooth, linear delivery is bereft of any notable surges of power and can often be misconstrued for being slow. But it's deceptively debauched. Boosted for 2015, the added dose of midrange is palpable via a quicker action throttle with added enthusiasm to pick up in any part of the rev range. It gobbles gears as quick as you dare to feed it and you often ask how this can be a standard machine.

During up and downshifts, the gear lever is soft on the toe, which is great for universal shifting and road riding. The fact that the throttle needs to be 100 per cent shut during downshifting for the auto-blipper to function is a minor grumble. Here's to a swift rematch... 🍷

## HOW FAST?

One lap: Retired  
Top speed: Wobbly

BMW S 1000 RR £14,760



There's not many can fans out there...



Revs, revs, revs...

Electric dreams!

## ENGINE

With such a strong powerplant to begin with, changes to the 2015 motor were relatively light. BMW tickled the RR's cylinder head with a geometry change of the intake and exhaust ducts helping to boost peak power. The intake cam was also redesigned and shaved 2 grams off the intake valves to up performance. Wanting to address the area around 4,500rpm, the intake manifold was adjusted. Throttle bodies were moved closer to the head, while at 11,500rpm the shorter inlet trumpets are enabled. Electronics? BMW threw the sink at the RR with only a leccy tin opener missing...

## CHASSIS

Over the old model, BMW found 4kg of stuff that could be shaved. A kilo of that was through a smaller battery, while the majority of the rest was lost through the switch in exhaust design. The frame is lighter and has a change in flexibility engineered in. Geometry has changed, with the head angle increased by half a degree while the rake has shortened by 1.5mm to 96.5mm. To improve grip, the swingarm pivot has been lowered by 3mm. The RR uses the HP4's semi-active Dynamic Damping Control system, made in conjunction with Sachs. Brembo brakes have a race ABS setting.

## Highlights

- Tweaked for 2015
- Semi-active suzzies
- Cruise control
- Pitlane limiter
- 204kg
- 188bhp

## TRACK 9

Scarily easy

## FAST ROAD 10

Go do a Dunlop

## HOOLOGAN 6

Able when you want it

## NEW RIDER 7

Easiest superbike to ride

## DESIRABILITY 8

They're selling like pints



On road tyres, trying  
to diagnose its woes...



## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



What a pity that we couldn't give this bike its full due in Portugal. I'm quite sure it would have vied for second place against the Yamaha and Ducati, having now spent thousands of miles riding it on road and track. There's an easy argument to be made that for both disciplines in an all round capacity, including a daily commute, the BMW will be hard to beat. It is just so bloody good at everything, stacked to the gills with extras and digital trinkets and the new engine has a wallop to it that the model has never possessed before, now giving it some much needed character. It is, however, very traditional at the same time, especially in the handling department despite the clever electronic suspension. It's only when you ride the latest and greatest you realise that 'handling' has changed so much in the last few years. It's solid mind you; accurate, predictable and steady. But it isn't flickable, and doesn't feel light on its toes, which does count against it.

**BJ's Verdict**

**8/10**

188 ponies within...



“WE CAN SEE WHY  
BMW HAS SHIFTED ITS  
PERFORMANCE  
PARAMETERS TOWARDS  
A ROAD BIAS...”

## Verdict

**9/10**

*Its holiday in the Algarve was cruelly cut short, but we all know the RR's potential. Being a better road bike hasn't heightened its track prowess...*

- + SUPER-FAST, ELECTRONIC SUSPENSION, ALL THE TOYS
- ELECTRONIC SUSPENSION, BIT TUBBY IN THIS COMPANY



# Ducati 899 Panigale



Brothers in arms...

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 2m02.296  
Top speed: 146mph

**J**ust after its launch, there was an influx of no-to-low mileage 1199 Panigales back on the showroom floor, deemed too brutal for the early adopter Ducatisti. While it lured potential owners with blisteringly beautiful sexual aesthetics, the motorised scaffold pole with wheels at either end just didn't cope well on the reality that is the Queen's Highway.

Which is exactly why the 899 has been so effective and appetising. It has to be one of the most popular sportsbikes in the UK (and one of the best road-only Ducatis ever built), with a healthy smattering of Minigales populating most counties – and not merely the rich ones.

So it's mystifying that a bike so capable on the road and in full race trim (as attested to by the pace in the Trioptions one-make series) can be so guff at Portimao and many other tracks. Then again, the guys racing at the front of the 899 Cup could probably

stick a set of sticky tyres on a Harley and lap quickly, given their innate talent.

Ridden in isolation, the 899 feels brilliant and Bologna's formula flourishes; 125bhp wrapped in a sharp but manageable chassis that doesn't get overly tested, with a feast of electronics to keep everything (including your right hand) in check. But among this pack, it feels gutless, slow, lacklustre, and the problem doesn't lie in one particular area. It lacks fluidity and masses of outright pace throughout the lap of Portimao.

It was painfully slow up the hill onto the start/finish straight, eventually leading into turn one, passing the grandstands and pit complex like it was in slo-mo. Even the Triumph, with its horsepower and cubic deficiency, seemed faster and vastly more exciting. Given its inherent Superquadro architecture, there's none of this stereotypical v-twin grunt to enjoy when caning it.

The 899 needs revving and constant abuse. Keeping the digi dash above 7,000rpm is vital in order to maintain momentum, which sounds much easier than reality allows.

As per last year, the two Panigales shared the same gear pattern throughout Portimao. Whereas the 1299 can run higher gears and utilise its stupendous grunt, the 899 was often in

between cogs during the majority of corners, which sucked balls and severely compromised its lap time.

It's also crying out for a slipper clutch for track sorties – not even the clever engine braking options can mask the demand for slippery assistance on the downshift. Bizarrely, the motor affects how the chassis behaves and limits its corner speed in some aspects.





DUCATI 899 PANIGALE £12,795



# ENGINE

The motor is designed according to Superquadro principles, meaning the 100 x 57.2mm bore and stroke figures give a ratio of 1.75. The new combustion chamber uses steel valves that run off a reprofiled camshaft (over the 848) to deliver torque in a friendlier manner than its bigger bros. The clutch, head and sump covers are all made in aluminium, not the magnesium from in the 1199 and 1299. The underslung exhaust is largely the same as the 1199's, tuned differently to suit the smaller engine's characteristics.

# CHASSIS

The engine is mated to the die-cast aluminium monocoque unit as a stressed member. This also houses the airbox and steering head. The unit is the same as found on the 1199. The swingarm design is different to the bigger bikes, using a double sided design to reduce costs accordingly. The rear wheel was redesigned to fit into this configuration. Showa BPFs appear for the first time on a Ducati, while the Sachs shock is based on the unit from the 1199. Brembo M32 calipers are aided by a Bosch 9MP ABS system.

# Highlights

- Minigale
- Showa/Sachs suzzies
- Brembos
- Double-sided swinger'
- 169kg
- 125bhp

# TRACK

Too compromised

# FAST ROAD

One of the best

# HOOLIGAN

Not frenzied enough

# NEW RIDER

Fickle but fun

# DESIRABILITY 10

Join the other 1000s

Not Swedish,  
but still sexy...



“RIDDEN IN ISOLATION, THE 899 FEELS UTTERLY BRILLIANT...”

899 Evo please!



Without getting too Neil Spalding on yo ass, the gearing issues also dictate corner entry speed; scrubbing off too much pace with shorter gears or running into a corner in taller cogs. Not even exceptional (yet budget) Brembos can guide you to an apex.

When the world spins on the correct axis and the gearing suits, the 899 is able to run incredible corner speed. The balance of the monocoque chassis means confidence to push with a planted stance and quick, agile steering. There's more flex and feel through the 'bars than its bigger siblings and you'll soon feel at home when jumping on the 899. As sporty as they are, the ergonomics are among the best on test, regardless of pilot. Everything feels neutral, natural.

Only sampling more Gucci and fluid suspension will leave room for criticising the thrifty Showa/Sachs partnership. The BPFs did a grand job of supporting the front-end at the arduous Portimao layout, while the Sachs shock – in combination with the electronics suite and consummate fuelling/throttle response – looked after a tired rear tyre with motherly levels of love. As the grip levels fell, the 899 still felt invincible on corner exit as the TC subtly culled the power and fed the information directly into the throttle. If there's a lesson in ride-by-wire strategies, Ducati should run the lecture. 📢

# BENJAMIN'S OPINION



Our best new bike of 2014 suffers around Portimao's long and hilly curves. It's not its fault, per se, and none of the skills which earned it our glowing praise last year have vanished. Rather, it's this circuit that gets the better of it and, much like the Triumph and to a lesser extent the F3, it feels awfully slow around here. Let's be honest, just getting in this top ten is a huge result for any sportsbike, an award in itself if you will, and the 899 remains one of the very best (and beautiful) road bikes here. There's good reason why Ducati has sold so many of them since its introduction, so good that a lot of my own friends have bought them and I can't blame them for making that choice as it's a brilliant motorcycle. It's also stunning around almost any track you sling it around. Aside from Portimao, it seems, which appears to be the only thing we can find that it's not very good at. Still a load of thumpy fun at the end of the day!

# BJ's Verdict

6/10



Serial abuser...

Neat is hard  
to beat...



# Verdict 6/10

It was always going to struggle in this company, but don't let this deter you. Brilliant in isolation and a brilliant road bike.

- + LOOKS, ROAD SKILLS, ELECTRONICS, GRIP
- BOTTOM-END, GEARING, SAVAGE LAP TIME







### HOW FAST?

One lap: 2m01.248  
Top speed: 162mph

Very fast and very furious...

# MV Agusta F4 RR

**A**s exclusively featured in Fast Bikes last month, the F4 RC is a pure and (not so) simple WSB homologation that allows Leon Camier a decent chance of competing – and MV Agusta to create one of the naughtiest motorcycles ever built.

The F4 has been fundamentally the same bike for a while now, albeit with a barrage of new components and exotic materials bolted on over the years. It's been well mooted that this is the final incarnation of the F4 as we know it, the swansong before the Varese factory unleashes something completely fresh.

Judging public feedback, it seems as though you can't get hold of the RC even if you have the readies ready to thrust into Giovanni Castiglioni's paw, such is the exclusivity. The next best thing in the F4 range, and a model you can actually swap for a large pile of cash with a dealer is this, the F4 RR. Swathed in archetypal F4-ness with a host of top gizmos, its presence charms and beguiles before a wheel is even turned.

Previous F4s were bordering on unrideable. The powerplant's fundamentals and speed could never be questioned, though it was always too much for the chassis and the ancillaries' execution left a lot to be desired. MV's hard work on refining the ride-by-wire has meant a more controlled ride onboard the F4, which manifests into more orderly handling. It's still far from civilised, but in a good way.

The RR is short of modern-day intuition and consistency of the leaders. It doesn't join the dots of superior, more refined rivals over

a lap, and this is evident in its lap time – five seconds off the top boys. MV claims a mighty 200bhp for the RR, and that's entirely plausible given its rampant power delivery. And there's no doubting the edgy inline-four is one of the strongest at SBOTY, with an expansive spread of power throughout the rev range that spins manically to the redline. It has the speed to hang with anything, so long as you can maintain that speed – upright, firing it down a straight is where it's most comfortable and stable, although sweeping between bends and mediocre lean angles proves tricky to lay down the power as you'd like.

Not surprisingly, RR has a huge amount of electronic adjustment on offer. Putting the willy-waving to one side, and without dabbling in the custom option, the most constructive riding mode is 'Sport'. The super-light throttle action is less prone to arcade-like sensations and snatchiness, with power able to be utilised sooner. Its fluidity over a lap of Portimao was also compromised by an iffy quickshifter that was prone to downing tools just when you wanted it to slickly select the next cog up the 'box.

Personally, I think the RR's electronic suspension is a fashion accessory – and an annoying one at that. Maybe Öhlins had a large unused batch from the old Panigale S going cheap? Either way, toggling through the F4's bar-mounted dash controls is only marginally less painful than listening to Kanye West's rendition of Bohemian Rhapsody. And it's the same for the TC, ABS and other options. What's wrong



Time to shine...

with using a screwdriver to adjust suspension? That said, the steering damper did a grand job of sedating the F4 over the crests that had a sidewind pounding it for two days straight.

Though treated to obvious refreshments over the years, the F4's inherently scaffold-stiff trellis frame provides racy dynamics and, sometimes, intimidating antics when pushing on. It always feels sharp and responsive, though there's no hiding from the weight disadvantage against newer bikes. Mid-corner, when the suspension has had time to digest the weight, the RR feels superb and assured, but it struggled round Portimao's dazzling array of challenges. 🏆

## Verdict 6/10

The more years pass us by, the more potential the F4 shows. As fast and frenzied as it is, it's just too flawed to be a serious contender.

- MOTOR, RAWNESS, LOOKS
- WEIGHT, OUTRIGHT PACE, ADJUSTABILITY



**MV AGUSTA F4 RR £19,999**

**ENGINE**

The short stroke motor uses 79 x 50.9mm bore/stroke measurements, with intake and exhaust valves using a single spring to reduce internal mass. The RR gets treated to titanium conrods and a rebalanced crank, with changes also made to the top end to up peak power. Fuelling comes via 50mm throttle bodies and a revised variable length intake tract system. The clutch has a slipper function as well as an engine braking management system and rear lift mitigation software built in. Four maps are built in, one is customizable.

**CHASSIS**

The RR gets treated to a TIG welded frame using a dedicated steel rather than the CrMo tubes of the stocker, the swingarm stays the same. Suspension is some of Sweden's finest; the Öhlins NIX30 forks and TTX shock are electronically adjustable, and adjustability can be autonomous from engine mapping. There is an electronically adjustable Öhlins steering damper. The standard Bembo M4 calipers are replaced by a set of M50 units. The aluminium alloy wheels lop a kilo from the RR's unsprung weight over standard.

**Highlights**

- ▶ Super trick F4
- ▶ Öhlins electronic suzzies
- ▶ Electronic everything
- ▶ Gyro-controlled TC
- ▶ 190kg
- ▶ 173bhp

**TRACK**

Fast, but hard work

**FAST ROAD**

Jailbait or A&E

**HOOLIGAN**

Hooligan's superbike

**NEW RIDER**

Hahahahahahaha

**DESIRABILITY**

It's an MV Agusta

**7**
**8**
**9**
**1**
**9**
*Cockpit heaven...*

*A sexy Swede...*

*Pure porn!*

**BENJAMIN'S  
OPINION**


Just think of the bikes that the stunning MV Agusta F4 RR has beaten to make it into this test. Half of Japan's finest, to name but a few. This, along with the epic F4 RC we tested last month, will be the very last of the F4 lineage. What bikes have been built this year are thin on the ground, especially considering the zero per cent finance schemes running on them. Thus, we were unable to get a standard version from the crate, this one comes from Ian at Speedycom. We're rather thankful to him for lending it us, although it has been personalised quite a bit from his extensive catalogue of bits they import to the UK. Feeling the stability almost any F4 demonstrates in the middle of a 120mph knee-down curve has to be experienced to be believed, and boy are they ever fast. So long old girl, it's been a long and fruity run, but it's your successor we really can't wait to behold. Ciao for now!

**BJ's Verdict**
**7/10**


*Settle her in a corner and  
revel in the MV's stability...*



# Kawasaki H2

**F**airies and butterflies aren't usually words associated with a 200bhp supercharged howitzer, but that's all I could conjure up in my mind as we lapped Portimao. Shut the throttle at certain midrange rpm, and the H2's fufu valve emits an almost angelic, fluttering soundtrack. Maybe this is what's on repeat on the entrance to the gates of heaven?

Love it, hate it, want it, shun it; you can't deny Kawasaki's efforts at experimentation and pushing the boundaries. The same keyboard warriors moaning about and questioning its existence are the same people who'll never get to ride one, and suffer with extreme envy. And I can see why they're jealous after razzing one on track for a few days...

Obviously, the H2's highlight is the supercharged motor. There are plenty of fanciful trinkets blended

with tangible gadgets (like the quickshifter – a first on any Kawasaki production bike) but the whole epicentre of the ride is focused on the sound, the shove and the sheer stupidity of the supercharger.

Such is the gargantuan spread of power, I managed an entire lap of Portimao in sixth gear. No clunking, no stuttering, no major resistance. We had to run a higher gear than the H2 wanted, purely because of the blower's lunacy. Anything around 8,000rpm – when the boost is most excitable – felt like a suicide mission as the throttle became belligerent and unpredictable, unsettling the bike mid-corner. In areas where the throttle could be pinned and gorging gears though the exceptional gearbox/quickshifter combo, the H2 shone as bright as the sun.

Bragging the highest terminal speed isn't an

accolade to win tests, yet the way in which the H2 chewed up Portimao's start/finish straight on its way to genuine 170mph warrants huge merit. She was demanding top gear even before the crest, where other bikes were still in fourth.

Thankfully, all H2s sold in the UK come rolling with this Akrapovic exhaust can, substituting the ghastly OE number. Not even the supplementary noise could repress the mix of deadly silence as the H2 cut through the air.

Treated with the respect it deserves, the H2 isn't merely an extra clinic for Dignitas and its euthanasia facilities. Even our ad man, Charlie, who struggles to cope with the power of his mower on full throttle, happily

circulated Portimao full of enthusiasm and in awe of its awesomeness and usability. Equally, if my testicles my were slightly larger, there was a sub-2 minute lap inside the H2, easy. But it deserves respect and pre-ride trepidation, and there was always that sense that if it did go tits-up on the H2, it would go tits-up in a very big way. Tits everywhere, then my moobs, closely followed by 238kg of supercharged descending from a grand height.

The KTRC electronic trickery

Welcome aboard  
the USS Enterprise!



## HOW FAST?

One lap: 2m00.144  
Top speed: 170mph

Not made for the turns,  
but impressively adept...





*Epic (so long as you're off the throttle mid-corner)*



## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



My high score isn't particularly for how the astonishing H2 performed in Portugal, more for the fact it's just bloody epic, even stood still. It's not a track bike, for starters, but it did surprisingly well nonetheless. Despite the wealth of sporting royalty in attendance, every lap on the H2 felt special, laced with a hint of danger even though it has a superb electronics suite. It took a few circulations just to adjust my wrist input to its savage throttle response, always remembering to use a gear higher than anything else. What a rollicking beast it was. There's a lot of haters out there for the H2, but what I've seen time and again is how they've been converted when either seeing or riding one. By coincidence, we had a H2 hater with us in Portugal, but after admiring it for a long while and then seeing it blitz down the front straight, he did a complete turnabout. He just couldn't resist the sheer awesomeness of the thing, and neither can I. Were I to choose one bike from this lot for road only work, it'd be the H2. One for my dream garage.

**BJ's Verdict**

**9/10**



*Forking lush!*



*Free upgrade...*



*Pity the air...*

**KAWASAKI H2 £22,000**



has never been so welcome on any Kawasaki. Despite the potential power surges and wicked ways, the throttle connection is sublime. No, it isn't the traction control aspect of the KTRC; it's the anti-wheelie. The H2 without such aids would be an unrideable horror, especially ascending and descending the rolling hills of Portugal.

There's no hiding from its chubby lines and weight issues when lapping at committed speeds, when you're riding it like a superbike, yet this proved to be

helpful when battling the Algarve winds. While others shook and shimmied, the H2 remained planted and sucked up the surface beneath. The straight bits understandably aided its impressive lap time, though it wasn't left embarrassed in the twisty bits either, only lacking skill in swift changes of direction. When clipping apexes, it was surefooted and on rails. Used tyre etiquette also wasn't an H2 forte and some riders preferred the hand-holding benefits of upping the traction control to survive... 🏁

## Verdict

**7/10**

*A showpiece it may be, but still devastatingly fast and effective. We could never get tired of spanking the H2.*

**+** SOMETHING DIFFERENT, THAT SUPERCHARGER, SURPRISINGLY SHARP  
**-** BOOST INTERFERENCE, BIT CHUBBY, DON'T SCRATCH IT

### ENGINE

The motor's trick even before you reach the supercharger, with polished ports, Inconel exhaust valves, hydroformed exhaust headers and cast flat crown pistons. Two balancer shafts curb vibrations. The supercharger is a centrifugal-type unit, with a 69mm impeller whose six blades are manufactured by a five-axis CNC machine. It spins at up to 130,000rpm (on the R) and is driven by the planetary gear train off the crank. A dog-ring transmission system is used from the old MotoGP project to cope with the power figures.

### CHASSIS

The use of the trellis frame allows heat from the motor to dissipate better, while the design allowed Kawasaki's engineers to better tune the chassis for flex. The single-sided swingarm improves ground clearance, and is bolted to the mounting plate at the back of the motor. New Kayaba Air-Oil Separate forks debut on the bike, while the Kayaba shock is adjustable for high/low compression. Brembo monoblocks have the unenviable task of stopping the bike, with giant 330mm discs mounted on cast aluminium wheels.

### Highlights

- ▶ Supercharged Ninja
- ▶ Snazzy paint
- ▶ Brilliant Brembos
- ▶ Anti-wheelie, thankfully
- ▶ 238kg (kerb)
- ▶ 193bhp

### TRACK

**7**  
*Hefty yet pacy*

### FAST ROAD

**4**  
*Erm, officer, erm*

### HOOLIGAN

**10**  
*The ultimate weapon*

### NEW RIDER

**1**  
*Boarding on treacherous*

### DESIRABILITY

**10**  
*Bucketlist must-do*





Calling the F3 special  
doesn't even come close...



# MV Agusta F3 800

**T**hree is the new four, and inline triples are all the rage these days, particularly middleweights of varying pedigree. While it can't be pigeonholed into a racing category, the F3 800 makes perfect sense in a sort of perfect balance, GSX-R750-type capacity. And unless you choose to race or want a Jules Cluzel-rep, it makes the F3 675 all but redundant.

Unlike its bigger and additionally cylindered brother, it's a bike that instantly feels accommodating and intuitive, easy to ride fast and able to exploit its limitations from the off. The key ingredient and angle of manipulation is that sexy front-end – Portimao is a circuit that requires intimacy with a bike's front-end to pivot on, and the MV has that confidence in abundance. It also has all the classic elements of a racing chassis; a short wheelbase, sharp geometry and a riding position that has you draped over the front wheel, poised for attack. Along with the RSV4, the F3 provokes unfathomable, piss-taking levels of off-the-throttle abuse and absolutely loves to be buried into a turn.

Last year at Portimao, the 800 set a blisteringly rapid lap time. In 2015, it was one of the worst to suffer from the track's diminished surface (an influx of massive bumps) and strong side winds, and there's no escaping the fact

it's in dire need of a steering damper for track activity, especially at Portimao. Strangely, the last time I had to purposely wheelie a bike over bumps to avoid terminal tankslaps was at a motocross track in my heyday. The exit of Portimao's turn 11 is riddled with severe bumps that unsettles even the steadiest of steeds. As standard, and very inexplicably, the 800 comes bereft of a steering damper, which ultimately scuppered lap times and its finishing order.

Like the Triumph, corner entry is never compromised by electronics or gearing woes. Not even a 1990's (ish) Nissin master cylinder can tarnish its braking skills and you, the rider, are in total (and manual) control of its destiny. In terms of sheer cornering speed and chassis sharpness, and the ability to carry its speed throughout a whole lap, the F3 is a real winner. Regardless of tyre fitment, there's oodles of mechanical grip from the front, and sticky rubber like the R10s induce insane levels of talent that the 800 can thrive and feed on.

Much improved, MV's in-house ride-by-wire system can still occasionally deal a computerised throttle sensation to the detriment of rear wheel connectivity – it certainly takes some getting used to. When chasing tenths aboard the F3, a culmination of this and its aggressive prowess make corner exit an area of lost time.

The electronics and rider aids aren't as sophisticated as the F4's arsenal, often erratic in function and difficult to trust on elderly rubber.

20mph down on the big boys at the end of the start/finish straight, it makes up for it with real punch in between the bends. MV's three-pot implementation plan is an angry, free-revving one, spinning quickly with little inertia within the cases. As involving and exciting as the 800cc triple is, we'd like a bit more to warrant its badges. In realtime, the MV feels no faster than the Triumph and lacks the ultimate refinement of the British version – the latter being no bad thing in many ways.

I've always maintained the 800cc inline triple configuration is better suited to a naked bike's prerequisites, given the punchy midrange and the minor issue of running out of revs too quickly. You're always after another measure of rpm from the motor before clicking another gear up. And, please, MV, update the switchgear/toggling options before I lose any more hair! 🍷

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 1m59.936  
Top speed: 145mph

Time to tuck in...



Made in heaven!



## Verdict

7/10

A true super sharp shooter with a mass of all-round talent. At the current rate of MV's progression, the F3 800 will soon be unstoppable. Can't wait for an RR...

✦ MIDRANGE PUNCH, FRONT-END APTITUDE, SEXY AS...

✦ ELECTRONIC ADJUSTABILITY, REAR GRIP, MORE GRUNT PLEASE



On a mission from  
God? Get an F3 800...

## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



This particular bike is our new longterm, so its first action was getting beasted on track for two days! I love the rough and ready feel of the F3 range, which blends with the slick sophistication of the chassis effortlessly well. However, Portimao drove a wedge into that sophistication a tad, as the ultra light front end wanted to slap its tits off over the three rises. It can be ironed out somewhat with suspension adjustment, as we found out last year, but a steering damper would have made a massive difference nonetheless. Like the 899, this deficiency probably wouldn't have shown up at a different circuit, but it didn't stop the MV feeling wonderful everywhere else and it never felt slow, like some of the other smaller capacity bikes on test. It delivers a tangible experience that makes you feel like you're grasping the bull by the horns and forcing it to your will, much like the joy our beloved two-strokes of yesteryear used to evoke. That kind of feeling is priceless, and the F3 delivers it in spades.

**BJ's Verdict**

**8/10**

MV AGUSTA F3 800 £11,899



Boomtastic...



"No, Super Bock doesn't  
make the tyres stickier..."



### ENGINE

The MV uses the F3's 675 motor, with the same bore but with a longer stroke (from 45.9mm to 54.3mm), which takes displacement up to 798cc. New, lighter pistons are used and there are new conrods and a counter-rotating crank (whose design reduces inertia) to cope with the extra power. A new in-house designed slipper clutch is added. Juices are fed by Mikuni throttle bodies and sprayed via six injectors. Gearing is changed from 16/43 to 17/39. All the electronics are MV's own.

### CHASSIS

The core of the F3 675 chassis remains, so there's the ALS tubular steel trellis frame and aluminium side plates connected to an extended swingarm (576.5mm) and bonds to make a short wheelbase of 1,380mm. 43mm hydraulic Marzocchi forks look after the front, while a Sachs shock supports the rear – both having received damping and valving changes to suit the 800's extra weight and power. The brakes come from, well, you can guess, and use a Bosch ABS system that has three modes.

### Highlights

- 800cc triple treat
- Electronic gizmos galore
- No steering damper
- Marzocchi/Sachs suzzies
- 173kg (kerb)
- 125bhp

### TRACK

Fast 'n' flighty

**9**

### FAST ROAD

Have to be committed

**9**

### HOOLIGAN

More racy than ruffian

**4**

### NEW RIDER

Do they do A2 kit?

**6**

### DESIRABILITY

Another sexy MV Agusta

**10**



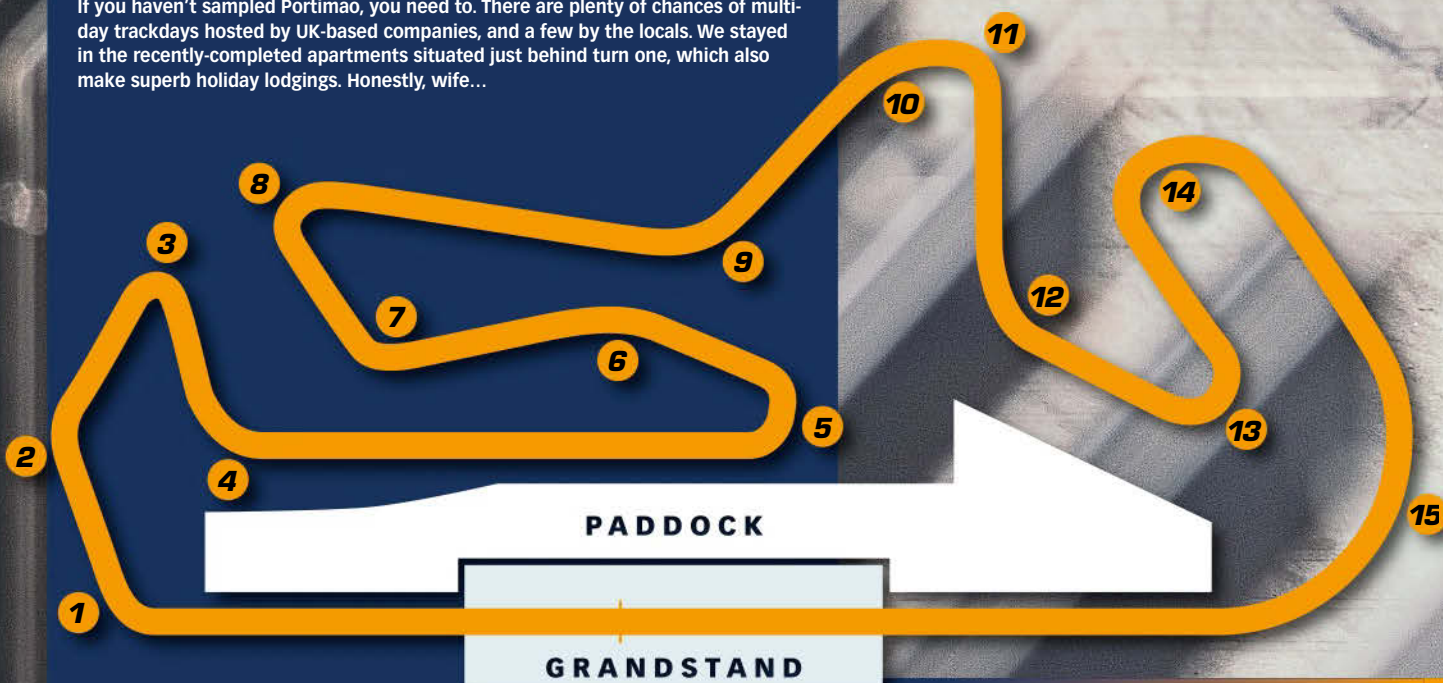
# PORTIMAO

You should all now be familiar with Portimao – or the Algarve International Circuit as it's now known. The annual world superbike event is also an annual pilgrimage for Brits (we see more English spectators than any other country), thanks to its location, viewing areas and spectacular scenery.

Primarily, it's one of the world's best test venues and the reason we've gone back there for a consecutive Sportsbike of the Year. It has every corner, undulation and eventuality in its layout, and punishes even the best of bikes.

Unfortunately, the circuit has struggled financially, but we're hoping it's through the worst of it (it should be after we raided the coffers for two days of solus use). The surface quality has dropped off, meaning quite a few bumps from the frequent car testing. Subsequently, lap times were nowhere near as fast as last year, despite the faster machinery. And the wind played absolute havoc on some occasions, trimming around 10mph off the top-speed of most bikes thanks to a gnarly headwind on the start/finish straight.

If you haven't sampled Portimao, you need to. There are plenty of chances of multi-day trackdays hosted by UK-based companies, and a few by the locals. We stayed in the recently-completed apartments situated just behind turn one, which also make superb holiday lodgings. Honestly, wife...



**Turn one:** The über steep braking zone, for me, is right up there with Paddock Hill and Eau Rouge in terms of stomach-turning action. It may not be as iconic as the aforementioned, but there's nowhere quite like it in the world. When you can judge turn one's entry speed and get the line bang-on, it's a deeply rewarding corner. A real test for braking and any front-end at high speed.

**Turn two:** Jonathan Rea's crash here this year was always in the back of my mind! Super-fast kink that's been degraded by the car's circuit layout but still a

massive rush. Flat out on 600s and treated with caution on the bigger bikes. Punishes the poorly balanced/set-up, and requires a neat constant throttle.

**Turn three:** One of the slowest points of the circuit. Braking isn't as easy as it looks, as you're not totally upright leading into the hairpin. Great test of trail braking and loading the front. Don't be tempted to run out wide and sacrifice the next corner.

**Turn four:** Another exhilarating section of

Tarmac. It's a totally blind exit and it's easy to turn-in too soon. Tricky to get consistency lap after lap, but a good assessment of acceleration and exit grip. Loads of room for fucking up on the outside.

**Turn five:** A horrible, horrible corner. It's a blind entry with a heavily rippled braking zone. The real challenge is not losing the front on the hump just before you peel in and guide the bike round as tight as you can. Use all the track on exit for drive up the hill, where quickshifter and TC were examined.

**Turn six/seven:** Guess what? It's a blind entry, certainly at speed on a superbike. You can't even see the braking marker until you're on it, and it's a place to test change of direction and stability under braking at speed. You can carry way more apex speed through the corner than initially thought.

**Turn eight:** Slow is fast here. It's vital to set up for the first rollercoaster drop off that follows immediately, so don't run too wide. Anti-wheelie and masses of stability is your friend on exit.

**Turn nine:** Using all the kerb on the outside to take a nice, sweeping line and limit lean angle (and ultimately grinding pegs), turn nine is a ballsy section of Tarmac. Another area where good ride-by-wire/throttle connection is required.

**Turn ten/eleven:** Not quite a double right-hander but the first apex is blind and it's easy to overshoot. Even a fast steering bike is reprimanded as you peel into the second apex. The exit is scattered with bumps, which upset most of the bikes at SBOTY.





**Turn twelve:** If you get the line right, it can be taken flat-out, even on the big boys. Big test of ground clearance. And big bollocks.

**Turn thirteen:** The slowest corner on the track, it ruins the flow of the circuit and is the only left-hander with meaningful lean. Tricky to gauge braking and turn-in, as all you can see is blue sky!

**Turn fourteen:** An ideal test for big lean heroics and mid-corner poise, the camber drops off initially but comes back to you throughout the bend. I had

another J-Rea moment, where he was making it look so easy by missing the first apex, running wide and clipping the inside kerb on the way out.

**Turn fifteen:** An area savagely affected by the wind and riddled with bumps, the last corner is a case of slow in, fast out. It's easy to rush in and lose the front as you ride the crest, but it's just a case of being patient. As soon as you're over that crest, power can be delivered as quickly as you dare, where drive is crucial onto the start/finish straight. Aided by camber.

## LAP TIMES CHART

	LAP TIME:	TOP SPEED:
<b>BMW S 1000 RR</b>	NA	NA
<b>Ducati Panigale 899</b>	2m 02.296s	146mph
<b>MV Agusta F4 RR</b>	2m 01.248s	162mph
<b>Kawasaki H2</b>	2m 00.144s	170mph
<b>MV Agusta F3 800</b>	1m 59.936s	145mph
<b>Triumph Daytona 675R</b>	2m 00.176s	145mph
<b>Kawasaki ZX-10R</b>	1m 58.901s	163mph
<b>Ducati Panigale 1299 S</b>	1m 58.238s	163mph
<b>Yamaha YZF-R1M</b>	1m 56.904s	164mph (1m 55.565s - slicks)
<b>Aprilia RSV4 RF</b>	1m 56.705s	165mph (1m 55.152s - slicks)





Buy a Triumph 675R and become an instant hero...

# Triumph Daytona 675R

It may not have been as fast or as sexy as its closest, most relevant rival, but the Hinckley Hooper gets the nod over the MV through sumptuous refinement and a touch of class. The 675R has lived up the dreary, almost forgotten 600cc class in recent times and justifies consideration as a middleweight, not solely branded as a '600'.

We all agree that, dynamically, the Triumph is difficult to fault. There wasn't a piece of Tarmac over the lap, over the two days, where we were left wanting more from the 675R, and finishing behind a host of lavish techno-queens costing twice the price shouldn't be scoffed at.

Consequently, there's very little to tweak or many set-up changes to make. It's a bike that can bossed and hustled round a track, inspiring ultimate conviction in its abilities very early into the relationship. There are no quirks or surprises, just seamless lappery.

Despite the comparatively quiet approach and apparent disinterest in racing, Triumph has seen huge success with the 675R in various guises. The latest incarnation encapsulates its racing heritage

with a massive overhaul, and a financially risky one at that. So when Triumph's testing staff include current British champions we shouldn't be surprised that the Daytona constantly impresses.

Like the F3, the 675R shifts heaps of weight over the nose and steers with rapid accuracy, even more so than the MV because it's more predictable – just looking at the apex will see you into the turn, which makes its intrinsic stability even more impressive. Where others were bucking and weaving, the Daytona's wheels remained firmly in line, whatever the input. It's impossible to back-in or get lively, never throwing shapes despite the sharp geometry and lack of the latest tech.

Of all the bikes on test, the diminutive Daytona was the least intimidating.

It's also the most undiluted at SBOTY; no traction control, no rider modes, no electronic trickery to get lost in. Ironically, it's also the easiest to ride at any speed, in any surroundings. Only ABS and a hot-knife-through-butter quickshifter is found on the 675R – although not a fault of Triumph's, it's vital to point out the vulnerability aspect of its 'standard' ABS setting for circuit use. The 675R's race setting is wonderful and hard to override, though abusing the standard setting on the track can often lead to having to hot wash your panties as the bike suddenly runs

on into a corner without any brakes at all. Try that when you're slinging on the anchors at 150mph...

Whether or not it's a trait among 675s, we're not certain, but this was the first year in several SBOTYs that the Trumpet didn't suffer from braking issues. There's not much that can prepare for the braking zone into turn one at Portimao. The g-forces you have to endure are the ultimate test for any bike's braking skills and stability, and high-speed turn-in, and the 675 was the most enjoyable over this complex section.

The throbbing heart of any Triumph is the engine. Pioneers of the three-pot configuration,

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 2m00.176  
Top speed: 145mph



Money well spent...



Back in black  
And silver...



“THERE REALLY ISN'T ANY NEED FOR TRACTION CONTROL – OR ANY OTHER CONTRAPTIONS...”

## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



If Triumph wants to stay ahead in the middleweight game, they're going to have to pull their socks up to remain in front of MV in the triple play stakes. The Italians are edging ever closer, yet it's the sheer creamy feeling and technical prowess of the 675R that noses it in the lead. It's had almost a decade of development and refinement, which makes it tough to beat, but that also comes at a slight cost. Around Portimao it was utterly faultless, displaying pinpoint accuracy, which allowed every iota of power it musters to be utilised to the fullest. It did struggle to break 140mph against the headwind down the home straight though, the only time its meagre (in this company) output counted against it. But it's so refined now that its character that we all initially fell in love with, I find, has been slightly dulled even if it did sound glorious through the Arrow can. Surely there's an 800cc version waiting in the wings somewhere?

**BJ's Verdict**

**8/10**

TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675 £10,949



No toys to play with...



## Verdict

**8/10**

The best '600' by a long way, the best middleweight by a fair way, only bettered by a fleet of more expensive superbikes. I'd have one in my garage, fo sho...

✦ NOISE, UNDILUTED THRILLS, HANDLING, STOCK SET-UP, ENGINE  
— SOMEHOW NOT AS GOOD AS THE NEXT FIVE...

### ENGINE

The 675cc inline triple was revised in 2013, where Triumph gave the bike a larger bore and shorter stroke. This enabled the wet liners to be ditched in favour of Nikasil coated bores. Compression ratio was increased. New main bearings were used and a new crank reduces power losses through less oil drag and less inertia. The gearbox was revised, with a new selection mechanism and a new first and second cog. The exhaust was dropped from under the seat to a side mounted stubby unit for a better CoG..

### CHASSIS

Geometry was changed on the R, reducing rake from 23.9 to 23 degrees, with a trail drop to 87.7mm from 89.1mm. Wheelbase fell by 20mm as a result. Weight distribution now stands at 52.9 per cent in favour of the front (up a percentage point). The new swingarm is asymmetric to allow for the exhaust. An Öhlins TTX36 shock looks after the rear while the NIX30 forks from the same manufacturer takes care of the front, with revised damping and an extra 10mm of stroke. Brembo monoblocks, with ABS, get the stopping gig.

### Highlights

- ✦ Straight outta Hinckley
- ✦ Öhlins suspension
- ✦ Brembo Monoblocs
- ✦ Race ABS
- ✦ 184kg (kerb)
- ✦ 115bhp

### TRACK

**10**

Uncompromised speed

### FAST ROAD

**10**

One of the best?

### HOOLIGAN

**4**

Too racy to be naughty

### NEW RIDER

**5**

Versatile speed

### DESIRABILITY

**7**

Patriotically proven

Triumph's execution is bordering on perfection. It still needs revving to extract the maximum benefit, but silken power is accessible from the very bottom of the dash, gradually building with an immense soundtrack – and it's delivered supremely. Granted, the Arrow slip-on fitted to this particular bike is an aftermarket extra, but it's worth every penny for the raucous racket alone. In a pack full of glamorous V4s and superchargers, the lil' Trumpet was the bike that triggered the

most attention from various holidaying onlookers.

There really isn't the need for traction control, or any other contraptions, and like we struggle to fault the 675R, we'd struggle to better it. The relatively poor lap time was purely down to tyres that had stomached eleven billion laps, therefore looked and felt a little on the completely shagged side. It was the bike that circulated the most laps on SBOTY, thanks to its versatility and unadulterated thrills – say no more.

If only Portimao was all corners...



Thunder generator...



# Kawasaki ZX-10R

**A** large percentage of bike sales are triggered by looks alone, and on this notion Kawasaki's ZX-10R is definitely an eight-pinter at two in the morning. In this 10-bike assemblage, the ZX-10R is by far the most monstrous of carbuncles here, which kind of subconsciously detracts from its appeal. It's just a bit 'meh' in this crowd of catwalk stalkers.

I remember looking at the Ninja back in 2011 and questioning how wrestling this Ninja would translate against the stopwatch. How could such a lazy-looking bike be so competent? It was, and it still is, and makes complete financial sense. With all the PCP and other

finance offerings available today, spending big has become far more affordable, with choices greatly expanded for the masses. Adding another £100 to the monthly tab isn't a huge stretch for most, and, even if your credit score is shite, there are copious amounts of used current model 10Rs saturating the second-hand market for around £8,000.

Against the stopwatch, we can't pinpoint particular regions of weakness, though its pace doesn't come as naturally as the BMW/Aprilia/Yamaha triumvirate. Among these skimpy racing specimens, its near-200kg kerb weight must be responsible for the slightly lethargic steering and effort in changing direction,

but there's nothing overly perceptible over a lap and the 10R hardly needs muscling around. That said, it's all about marginal gains these days and the Ten simply doesn't brag the athleticism of bikes nearly five years younger. That unexplainable cutting edge is missing, though it does meet an apex beautifully.

Corner exit and braking stability is where the green meanie really excels. It may be nearing five years old, and missing gyros and six-axis IMU thingamabobs, but Kawasaki's KTRC traction control is still one of the best systems about in terms of outright performance gains. Likewise, the anti-wheelie

*Zed's not dead...*

*Can that can...*

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 1m58.901  
Top speed: 163mph

was most efficient at Portimao. The ZX-10R's TC is far from twat-proof on the road, ably spinning unobtrusively when called upon, which in turn makes it so enchanting on the track. It subtly teaches you where the limit of adhesion lies, almost delivering a helping hand to your right paw.

And abusing the right hand doesn't bring the realtime shortfalls seen on the dyno. 10-15bhp down on its adversaries, it matched the top speeds at the end of the start/finish straight with several gears in hand, such is the über tall gearing – it didn't even need third gear until the start line! Less cog changes is a good thing, as the ZX-10R was the only bike at SBOTY without a quickshifter...

It's certainly missing the midrange punch of fresher powerplants, which forgoes momentum in tighter sections, but the top-end frenzy easily antidotes this suffering. At 10,000rpm, the 10R starts to make sense and doesn't rev as manically to the redline.

*Riding the crest of a, er, hill...*



*Dressing to the right.*



*A better unit than of old...*



*Time for a watering...*



“NEARLY 15BHP DOWN ON THE TOP BIKES, THE ZX-10R STILL MANAGES TO MATCH THEM IN TERMS OF SPEED”



**KAWASAKI ZX-10R £12,199**

*A tacky tachometer*
**BENJAMIN'S  
OPINION**


Is this bike really five years old? It's very easy to discount the Kawasaki, considering the competition, right up until you ride it. It was brilliant around Portimao once you got over the fact it's desperately missing a quickshifter in this company, the only bike not to have one. It remains a strange beast when you first ride it, almost chopperesque in riding position and as you pull away you always wonder just how it's going to tackle corners quickly. Two laps is all it takes to remember how, with a bulletproof front end and awesome rear end grip, backed up by a very good TC system. This allows you to thoroughly take the piss into, through, and beyond a turn. I genuinely think they could just add a 'shifter, maybe another five gee gees, and it'll be bang in the ballpark for years to come. It's only the 1299's renaissance and the MotoGP inspired R1 that knocks it down to this position. Yet when you tally its age into the equation, it's a seriously impressive result. Great bike!

**BJ's Verdict**
**8/10**
**ENGINE**

Previous 10Rs used a cast iron crank, but from 2011 Kawasaki has employed a chromoly unit, located 10-degrees and 28mm higher than on the 2010 bike. The transmission shaft is located above the other two (107mm higher) to better centralise mass. The cylinder bore centres are set 2mm towards the exhaust side, reducing lateral piston forces, while the pistons are lighter with shorter skirts and thinner rings. No laughing at the back. Intake valves are 1mm larger than before, at 31mm, while the intake tappets are bigger.

**CHASSIS**

The all-cast aluminium, seven piece frame better follows a direct line to the swingarm pivot point. The swingarm is a three piece, all-cast unit, made longer to improve drive. In the 2011 changes, the seat was lowered 17mm, the centre of gravity lowered by 4mm, the rake lopped by half a degree and the trail shortened by 3mm to 107mm. The Showa BPF is used up front with a horizontal back-link shock at the rear. Tokico upset the Brembo love-in, with radial calipers operated by a radial master cylinder. ABS is an option.

**Highlights**

- Superstock choice
- Showa BPFs
- Ohlins steering damper
- Incredible TC
- 198kg
- 175bhp

**TRACK**

Racers' choice, still fast

**FAST ROAD**

Needs revving, but stable

**HOOLIGAN**

It's a Kawasaki Ninja...

**NEW RIDER**

Wide and wild

**DESIRABILITY**

Little AI remains flaccid

**Verdict**
**8/10**

Aging, fugly, and doesn't boast the willy-waving new-age horsepower, but still fast and equally fun. Needs a quickshifter...

- TRACTION CONTROL/ANTI-WHEELIE, TOP-END, VALUE
- LOOKS, TALL GEARING, LOOKS, NO QUICKSHIFTER, LOOKS



Half a decade old, but still cutting the mustard...



The semi-active  
is semi-inducing...



# Ducati 1299 Panigale S

**W**e were present at the Milan show when Ducati unveiled the 1299 Panigale, an event where the Bologna bosses revealed their passionate hunger for winning magazine group tests again. 2015's updates were minimalist on the eye, to say the least, but only a few months later we were at this very track spanking a fleet of brand-new 1299 Panigales at the world press launch. Instantly, we knew Ducati was back...

I rode an 1199 Panigale the other day. A year ago, it was awesome, if a little raucous. Now it feels lethargic and dated, and all thanks to relatively negligible changes across the 1299's board that equate to a devastating end result. There was nothing orthodox about the 1199. Everything from the cantankerous power delivery to the concrete monocoque chassis inspired nothing but heart palpitations, bruises, and slow laps...

Once upon a time, a Ducati would be vastly slower at covering a lap than, say, the ZX-10R. Fast forward to 2015, and the 1299 Panigale S and all its gadgetry is matching most against the stopwatch. The majority of its

added pace can be apportioned to the chassis' light dusting, rather than the supplementary cubes. Most significantly, there's more flex, more feel, and ultimately more grip as the wheels scrub more of the surface beneath. Its more conventional chassis impression means you can now really attack apexes, whereas before the bike was attacking you...

The 1299 now steers as quick as anything, though the two ends don't work together as flawlessly as the conventionally framed brigade, therefore sacrificing a smidgen of precision now and again.

And extorting its lap times doesn't come as intuitively as the four-pot bikes and that's largely down to how savagely the motor spins and delivers the power, meaning more experienced riders will benefit most. If there's a motor that feels like it'll spontaneously explode, it's the 1299 Panigale's. It's a thunderous, metallic ride that feels like nothing else on this planet.

Ducati's simple quest was to make a faster, easier road bike without being restricted by racing regulations. There's no replacement for displacement, so

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 1m58.238  
Top speed: 163mph

DUCATI 1299 PANIGALE S £20,795



## ENGINE

The 1299 engine uses 'box in box' 116mm pistons for the 119mm diameter bore, with a 60.8mm stroke. It's an L-Twin, meaning the cylinders sit at 90-degrees to one another. It's rolled back by 21-degrees so it can be placed forward for improved weight distribution. Crankcases are die-cast and incorporate a water-jacket around the rods that affix the cylinder head onto the cases. The engine is fed by RBW fuel-injection, in tandem with the inertial measurement unit (IMU) and ECU which controls the various riding systems.

## CHASSIS

The engine is the chassis, with a small aluminium extension attached to the top cylinder to form the headstock. The single-sided swingarm bolts directly to the engine, too. The wheels are light-weight forged aluminium Marchesini items. Öhlins provides the suspension front and rear with its smart EC semi-active 'event-based' kit. Hardware-wise, it's a 43mm NIX forks compliment a TTX36 chock. They also supply the semi-active Smart EC steering damper, too. Brembo M50 calipers bite huge 330mm discs, with race ABS.

## Highlights

- Big-bore Panigale
- Auto-blipper
- Öhlins leccysuzzies
- Lean angle display
- 190kg
- 181bhp

## TRACK

Pace and gizmos galore

## FAST ROAD

Plenty of new grunt

## HOOLIGAN

Executive thief's choice

## NEW RIDER

Tall and tortuous

## DESIRABILITY

Bologna beauty




*Bring the noise!*

*It's got the lot...*

boring out the Superquadro motor for more stereotypical v-twin grunt was the order of the day. Make no mistake; the revised engine is still savage, but somehow easier to ride fast as there's no longer the need to wait for the 7,000rpm powerband to erupt and then be administered by clever electronic aids. Usable grunt is on tap further down the rev range, which aided its performance at Portimao.

Although the software and

hardware differ from each other, the Panigale's Öhlins electronic suspension feels more effective than the Yamaha R1M's execution. Being event-based, the damping changes don't harm its fundamental handling like the BMW's semi-active shizzle, only supporting the front under braking, softening at the apex for grip and steering, before stiffening the rear under acceleration to reduce squat. A culmination of the immense mechanical grip, excellent TC, and the added stability of the Bridgestone rubber means

corner exit is lively, but measured. It all sounds too good to be true, but it works. Having ridden the standard version – sans Öhlins trickery – it's an advantage only truthfully constructive on track.

Though not as brutal as the 1199, laps aboard the 1299 are still a physically exhausting workout thanks to the inherent idiosyncrasies. With a barbaric Brembo set-up and an anorexic structure, there's very little to take your body weight under heavy braking other than the 'bars, and such is the rampaging delivery you really have to hold on for the ride of your life. 🏆

## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



I absolutely love these bikes. The overhaul Ducati performed on the Panigale is nothing short of miraculous, making it usable yet retaining everything that made the old 1199 truly beastly. I did get a shock though. Having done the launch at Portimao, the 1299 was the first bike I jumped on. But the ridiculous outright grip from the R10 tyres meant it was back to being a wrestling match again. So I came in, adjusted the suspension via the left handlebar, and went back out. It was better, but needed further tweaking. So once again I made the suspension stiffer but still allowed it damping control, set the steering-damper to a harder setting and turned the engine to maximum everything on 'race'. It was bloody perfect, and all done within 10 minutes from my left hand. We live in truly wondrous times and Ducati has created an amazing bike that has an astonishing symbiosis with its electronic armoury. I said earlier that for road only work I'd have the H2. But, I'd never buy a bike just for road unless I was minted. With that in mind, my personal choice from everything here would be the 1299, because it's absolutely fricking glorious.

**BJ's Verdict**

**10/10**

## Verdict

**9/10**

*It may look like only the '1' has been replaced with a '2' on the fairings, but the subtle, widespread changes have transformed the Panigale. It's still a real rollercoaster of a ride...*

- ✦ GRUNT, ELECTRONICS, NICER CHASSIS/HANDLING, THRILLS
- ✦ STILL PHYSICAL, NOT AS FLUID AS LEADERS

*The 1299 offers beauty and the beast in one machine...*







## BIKE IT TYRE GEAR

We needed some decent tyre changing gear while we were onsite in Portugal, so turned to Bike It. They have an extensive catalogue of kit they supply to the trade, and we chose exactly what we need; things such as a bead breaker, rim protectors, tyre lube, tyre arms and, crucially, a wheel balancer. All of it worked flawlessly, in fact the bead breaker came in for particular praise from our tyre changing monkey, Paul, who incidentally also brought his own compressor, another essential item for changing tyres. But it goes to show with the right gear you can do this kind of thing yourself without too much bother, and Bike It's stuff is sturdy, well priced and most importantly, it works a treat.

■ [www.bikeittrade.com](http://www.bikeittrade.com)







*The best bikes get treated to the best rubber...*



*Just beautiful!*

## BRIDGESTONE R10 AND V02 SLICK

To ensure a fair test, we furnished all ten bikes with Bridgestone's awesome R10 rubber; the Japanese firm's sportiest, stickiest

road-legal tyre. Though not recommended for the road, and belligerent when new, the R10 has to be one of the best supersports tyre on the market, with a fine blend of outright grip and impressive stability.

Portimao is notoriously harsh on rubber, and the ambient temperature

edged towards the mid-30s, but after a gazillion laps on most of the bikes the R10s kept supplying endless amounts of grip. Sure, the best of the traction was curtailed by the end of the first day, though grip remained predictable after that.

For all the bikes, it was an upgrade in rubber. Bikes like the 1299 Panigale, that were developed on other brands, seemed to revel in the added stability of the R10. Out-and-out racers like the Yamaha and Aprilia simply couldn't be ridden any harder thanks to ground clearance issues. 'Nuff said.

For the ultimate test to gauge the winners, and after we found the RSV4 and R1M tricky to split, the wheels came out again and we fitted the V02; Bridgestone's all-new slick

that has the praise of many racers, some who are contracted to rival brands. The firm is leaving MotoGP racing after years at the helm, but utilising their GP-belt technology in the V02 ensures high performance and vast contact patch. The foray into the big boy's paddock has only helped the hoi polloi like us.

While extra lean angles were scuppered, trail braking and exit drive were clear benefits of the V02. We'd usually expect two seconds a lap between the two sets of tyres, but high winds and the fact that the RSV4's exhaust was touching down, unfortunately stopped the slick-induced rout. Set the bikes up properly, and watch those lap times tumble.

*Slick operator...*



Japan is back. Well, at least the Yamaha bit is...



# Yamaha YZF-R1M

**H**onestly speaking, the R1M was the weapon I was most looking forward to firing around the Algarve. Maybe it was the Valentino Rossi M1 connotations (he is, after all, the only man I'd make love to) or maybe it was because this is the first all-new sportsbike to make an appearance in an age.

Whatever you think of the looks, you can't argue with the spec' sheet. Take the already Gucci R1 and sprinkle on Öhlins electronic suspension, a liberal splashing of carbon fibre, and finish it all off with that factory-looking GPS sensor on the seat unit. It screams race bike – and made me scream for every lap of Portimao.

From day one, it was clear that SBOTY was between two bikes; the Yamaha and Aprilia, and splitting them was far more difficult than expected. They share the same dyno numbers, their lap times were tenths apart, and both were far quicker than the rest. They both offer unrivalled track etiquette,

special soundtracks and the most involving, alluring tactics. Ultimately, it's almost down to personal preference, but there are one or two minor flaws in the Yamaha's arsenal that make the decision more simple.

It doesn't even take the length of pit lane or break-neck speeds to appreciate the R1M's racy

dynamics. The chassis feels taut, responsive and is poised lightly on its springs ready for input. Out on track, it's the closest thing to the Aprilia's GP-style outlook and incredible all-round handling capabilities, unlike anything to ever come out of Japan. In fact, it's the closest thing to a European Japanese-built bike

we've ever sampled.

It may be tall, but there's no escaping its pint-sized prominence and small frontal section; a far cry from the previous incarnation and hard work at high speeds in high winds. Even Josh Brookes makes it look like a minimoto – and it feels every bit as fast as Josh's racer.

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 1m56.904  
Top speed: 164mph  
(55.565 – slicks)

LIF is GUFF...






*Now making proper power...*

Packing 184bhp into the crossplane crank, short stroke engine, the R1M is anything but linear and friendly. Anything below 7,000rpm feels very digitalised, almost broken in its tameness and vague throttle, and keeping the motor spinning in the go-zone is essential to avoid lost impetus. It was an absolute riot at Portimao, ripping from corner to corner with unhealthy levels of enthusiasm and raw speed. It felt like the only bike that still had some potential only a factory racer could unlock.

As brutally fast and nimble as she is, the R1M suffers with lingering ride-by-wire throttle issues (both too direct or too vague at differing times), which is nothing new to Yamahas and the R1M loses rear wheel connectivity that was so good on its predecessor. Even on fast, sweeping, wide-open tracks like Portimao, there isn't a suitable mode configuration to remedy the situation. It's almost as if there's too much electronic jurisdiction sometimes, tagged '3D control' by Yamaha. Thankfully, binning the

'LIF' anti-wheelie facility dramatically reduces unwanted intervention. However, you're constantly brimming full of confidence knowing the clever aids will tidy any rider misdemeanours.

Pulling the bike into a turn (which takes zero effort), the revs drop, as does the engine noise, which unveils a strange ticking sound from the Electronic Racing Suspension (ERS). This isn't the gimmicky kit as seen on the MV; the Öhlins makes micro adjustments every millisecond, using a six-axis gyro to comprehend lean, roll, pitch, yaw and whether you're accelerating or braking. But despite the electronic assistance, the R1M doesn't feel as planted to the Tarmac as the Aprilia when you're on a hot one.

If there's one area which the Yammy blatantly squanders time to the RSV4, it's the brakes. She often backs round with a lack of engine braking control on the entrance to tighter turns, causing slight instability and a few bitty clenching moments. That aside,

it's a stunning return to form for the R1. 🏆

## Verdict 10/10

Take a bow, Yamaha. The R1M has is the closest challenger yet to topple the RSV4's dominance. If you're after Japanese dependability, look no further

- ✦ TOP-END POWER, PACE, GIZMOS, RACY CHASSIS
- ✦ THROTTLE, EXCLUSIVITY, LOW-END GRUNT

## YAMAHA YZF-R1M £18,499



### ENGINE

Yamaha keeps with the crossplane concept, but in the guts of the R1 is a 36mm shorter and lighter crankshaft, plumping up low and midrange grunt. A balancer is used whose weights are close to the outer cylinders. Bore and stroke is changed (79 x 50.9mm from 78 x 52.2mm), while con-rods are made from titanium, offering a weight saving of 40 per cent. It's all change at the top, with the use of a DLC coated rocker arm valve drive mechanism to give higher valve lift than the cam height. Compression is 13.0:1.

### CHASSIS

Yamaha keeps the Deltabox name, but ditches the old frame in favour of this gravity cast unit that uses the motor as a stressed member. The subframe is now made from magnesium. The swingarm uses gravity cast, forged and two-piece components and is 15mm shorter. Wheelbase is 10mm shorter than before) while rake and trail remain constant. Shunning the move to Brembo, the R1 uses home brewed four piston monoblock calipers. The standard bike uses Kayaba units, the M the Öhlins Electronic Racing Suspension.

### Highlights

- All-new challenger
- 3D electronics
- Öhlins ERS
- Carbon medley
- 200kg (kerb)
- 184bhp

### TRACK 10

Tenths from the RSV4

### FAST ROAD 7

Throttle needs abusing

### HOOLIGAN 9

Buttons to spoil the fun

### NEW RIDER 4

Er, rain mode?

### DESIRABILITY 10

You'll have to wait


*Fit for a GOAT...*

## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



I found it really hard to split the Yamaha and the Ducati, it was only a few foibles that meant in my own opinion the R1 drops a point. The first isn't really its fault, in that I just don't fit on it properly. It's not such an issue on track, but on the road I always feel like I'm adjusting myself uncomfortably to suit it, which doesn't always feel natural. The clever Öhlins on this natty looking limited edition R1 does help with the stability issues the stock bike suffers from under heavy braking, but still doesn't quite cure it. And then there's the throttle response, which is as peculiar as many other Yamahas tend to be these days. It can be helped using different modes, but again, not quite ironed out completely. Speaking with some of the lads racing them in the European superstock series, they're still trying to get it cock-on. However, in this digital age I'm quite sure updates will completely sort it in time, and it doesn't spoil what's otherwise a ridiculously fantastic bike, not one bit – it's amazing.

*'Ave it, corner...*


### BJ's Verdict 9/10



# Aprilia RSV4 RF

**W**ith the plethora of innovative bikes breaking through this season, 2015 was surely the year that Aprilia's RSV4 would finally get a SBOTY spanking? That would require a cold day in hell...

While other manufacturers released premium fruits of their intensive labours, Aprilia simply built on the already incredible base of the RSV4, unveiling the RR and RF models. This, the limited edition RF version, is the only 2015 derivative we'll see on UK shores, and needless to say it's bursting with goodies. And uncontrollable talent.

Jumping aboard the Aprilia after riding any other bike at SBOTY

was like jumping on a full-factory racer. The entire package, from uncompromised handling, to the V4's noise and 21st century Loris Reggiani paint scheme, means it's hard to find the superlatives to describe this machine. Unlike the other eight working bikes on test (and not counting the immaculate 675R), the Aprilia is virtually flawless over a lap, a session, a race. From braking to apex, from apex to exit, the Aprilia blitzes the opposition in every aspect with an unsurpassed skill set.

Other than the start/finish straight and the section leading downhill into the first left-hander, you spend copious amounts of time on the side of the tyres at

Portimao, which favours the steadfast Aprilia like no other. That distinctive ability to brake deep into a turn, load the front-end, rail an arc through the corner thanks to its addiction for apex speed and unwavering lean angles can only be matched by a season-long sorted race machine.

Of the big bikes here, the RF is the most formidable on the brakes, somehow distributing weight through both wheels rather than forcing the task solely through the nose of the bike. This not only means stability, but also accurate turn-in. The RSV4 almost slows down the procedure, giving you more time to think and act.

Mid-corner, and there isn't another bike that delivers such poise and outright grip. If you want a grip party, invite the Aprilia. If it was a burger at McDonalds, it would be the McGripster. Not even decking its exhaust when furnished with

slick tyres could unnerve the RSV4, though when you hear metal making love to the Tarmac and you know it's not a footpeg, it's disconcerting to say the least.

Over the years of the RSV4's steady evolution, the rear end's mechanical grip has vastly improved, and you're ably assisted by the in-house APRC electronics for sticking in a fast lap. The system supports the more experienced and racers, rather than a road-based safety device, but we barely felt any intrusion over the few days on track.

If there was one area that needed attention, it was the V4 lump of goodness. As faultlessly refined and deliciously smooth as it was, it lacked the top-end speed of its rivals and got pummeled on the straights – slower by 10mph in preceding SBOTY tests. We didn't need GPS verification either.



Sheer perfection...

## HOW FAST?

One lap: 1m56.705  
Top speed: 165mph  
(55.152 – slicks)

It takes abuse  
like no other...







A new stand was required afterwards...

What a front end...



What a sound...



What an average dash...



## BENJAMIN'S OPINION



When I rode the Aprilia at Misano on the launch, I had a sneaking feeling it was going to win SBOTY. It was so good I gave it an 11/10 score, because it blew my mind. But with the phenomenal GP inspired R1M clawing at its title, and the 1299 S taking a leaf from Lazarus' book, it was hard to be sure. That's because the Aprilia feels almost the same as before, even with an extra 30bhp backing it up. It makes exactly the same power as the Yamaha and Ducati now, yet the chassis barely noticed. But just five laps at Portimao was all it took to be one hundred per cent sure it's still the Daddy. It doesn't need electronic suspension, nor a downshifter, it's simply the very best experience on track you can have; the most involving, thought evoking and superlative inducing ride in the world. The RSV makes you feel as if you're a riding god like no other, it just gives and gives and asks almost nothing from you in return. No other bike here does that. It's WSB for road and track at under £20k, and that's why, for the fifth year in a row, it's my number one.

**BJ's Verdict**

**11/10**

## Verdict 11/10

The best just got better. The fastest, best handling, sexiest sounding superbike for the masses is the Aprilia RSV4 RF, better known as the Italian Jesus (but with fewer followers)

+ EVERYTHING...

- ...ER, LIMITED NUMBERS?

### APRILIA RSV4 RF £18,135



#### ENGINE

Both the internals and externals of the 65° V4 has been redesigned. Valve seat heights have been increased to improve reliability under heavy load, and the internal cooling systems have been upgraded. The timing system is a mix of gear and chain driven cams, which allows for a very narrow head. Camshafts are new, lighter and with a different profile and valves made from titanium. Engine cases are now fashioned and reinforced by shell fusion. The injection throttle bodies are variable and each bank has dedicated servos.

#### Highlights

- ▷ V4 sexathon
- ▷ APRC electronics
- ▷ Ohlins suspension
- ▷ Only 500 made
- ▷ 180kg
- ▷ 184bhp

#### TRACK

The Italian Jesus

**FAST ROAD** 9

Lessened over years

**HOOLIGAN** 5

Too focused

**NEW RIDER** 6

There are worse...

**DESIRABILITY** 10

Biaggi's lovechild

#### CHASSIS

The main frame remains almost identical to the previous RSV4's, which means a wealth of adjustment – including adjusting engine position. Ohlins suspension graces both front and rear, and can be adjusted to suit nearly any rider. Likewise, the steering damper is also from the Swedes. The brakes are Brembo M430 calipers biting 320mm discs, with Race Bosch ABS installed, including rear-wheel-lift mitigation. The V4-MP telemetry allows you to record and analyse all aspects of the bike as you ride it on track.

Again, we have tighter WSB rules to thank for the monumental engine upgrades over its predecessor; to the tune of over 20bhp at the rear wheel. Aprilia has retained all of the V4's previous lushness but boosted the entire rev range. There's noticeably more bark throughout the V4's working parameters, but it's only when exploring the upper echelons of revs and gears that the extra oomph becomes a reality. It feels no faster than any of its counterparts between the bends, though it's far easier to manipulate the power and deliver it where it matters.

Considering a few years ago that the RSV4 drank fuel like it was running on petrol from a rural Ethiopian service station, the class-leading fuelling and ride-by-wire strategies are even more welcome. Running taller gears at lesser speeds doesn't prove a challenge, such is the sumptuous throttle and extensive power, and we had the luxury of multiple gear choices through several of Portimao's curves. Stunning. There's no other word for it. 🍷



# TECH DATA

ENGINE	Type	999cc, l/c, 16v, DOHC, inline four	989cc, l/c, 8v, DOHC, v-twin	998cc, l/c, 16v, DOHC, inline four
	Bore x Stroke	80 x 49.7mm	100 x 57.2mm	79 x 50.9mm
	Compression	13.0:1	12.5:1	13.4:1
	Fuelling	BMS-KP EFI, dual injectors, 48mm t-bodies	EFI, single injector, 62mm throttle bodies	Eldor EFI, dual injectors, 50mm throttle bodies
	Claimed Power	188bhp @ 13,200rpm	125bhp @ 10,200rpm	173bhp @ 13,400rpm
ELECTRONICS	Claimed Torque	112.Nm @ 9,500rpm	92Nm @ 8,750rpm	101Nm @ 9,000rpm
	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/ Four	Yes/four	Yes/four
	Traction Control	Yes, 15-levels	Yes, 8-levels	Yes, 8-level
	ABS	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Quickshifter	Yes	Yes	Yes
CHASSIS	Wheelie Control	Yes	No	Yes
	Launch Control	Yes	No	Yes
	Frame	Aluminium bridge frame	Monocoque aluminium	Steel tubular trellis with Alu pivot plates
	F Suspension	Sachs 46mm DDC fork	Showa 43mm BPF, fully adj.	Öhlins EC NIX30 forks
	R Suspension	Sachs DDC shock	Sachs horizontal shock, fully adj.	Öhlins EC TTX36 shock
DIMENSIONS	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembo caliper, 320mm discs	Four piston Brembo calipers, 320mm discs	Four piston M50 calipers, 320mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Single piston caliper, 220mm disc	Two piston caliper, 245mm disc	Four piston Nissin caliper, 210mm discs
	Wheelbase	1,438mm	1,426mm	1,430mm
	Rake/Trail	23.5 degrees/ 96.5mm	24.0 degrees/ 96mm	23.5-24.5 degrees/ na
	Seat Height	815mm	830mm	830mm
PRICE	Kerb Weight	204kg	169kg	190kg
	Fuel Capacity	17.5 litres	17 litres	17 litres
	Price From	£14,760 BMW Motorrad 0370 5050160 <a href="http://www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk">www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk</a>	£12,795 Ducati UK 00800 00382284 <a href="http://www.ducatiuk.com">www.ducatiuk.com</a>	£19,999 MV Agusta Cheshire 01298 81663 <a href="http://www.mvagustacheshire.com">www.mvagustacheshire.com</a>



ENGINE	Type	1,285cc, l/c, 8v, DOHC, v-twin	998cc, l/c, 16v, DOHC, inline four	999.6cc, l/c, 16v, DOHC, v-four
	Bore x Stroke	116 x 60.8mm	79 x 50.9mm	78 x 52.3mm
	Compression	12.6:1	13.0:1	13.6:1
	Fuelling	EFI, dual injectors, 67mm throttle bodies	EFI, dual injectors, 45mm throttle bodies	Marelli EFI, dual injectors, 48mm t-bodies
	Claimed Power	181.4bhp @ 10,500rpm	184.2bhp @ 13,750rpm	184bhp @ 13,500rpm
ELECTRONICS	Claimed Torque	130.2Nm @ 8,750rpm	107.7Nm @ 8,750rpm	107Nm @ 10,000rpm
	RBW/Riding Modes	Yes/three	Yes/ Four	Yes/Three
	Traction Control	Yes, 8-levels	Yes, 8-levels	Yes, 8-levels
	ABS	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Quickshifter	Yes	Yes, 2-levels	Yes
CHASSIS	Wheelie Control	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Launch Control	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Frame	Monocoque aluminium	Aluminium Deltabox frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	Öhlins ESANIX30 43mm forks	Öhlins ESA 43mm forks	Öhlins 43mm fork, fully adj.
	R Suspension	Öhlins ESA TTX36 shock	Öhlins ESA shock	Öhlins shock, fully adj.
DIMENSIONS	Front Brakes	Four piston Brembo monoblock, 330mm discs	Four piston calipers, 320mm discs	Four piston M430 calipers, 320mm discs
	Rear Brakes	Two piston caliper, 245mm disc	Single piston caliper, 220mm disc	Two piston caliper, 220mm disc
	Wheelbase	1,437mm	1,405mm	1,447mm
	Rake/Trail	24 degrees/ 96mm	24 degrees/ 102mm	24.5 degrees/ 105mm
	Seat Height	830mm	860mm	840mm
PRICE	Kerb Weight	166.5kg	199kg (kerb)	180kg (kerb)
	Fuel Capacity	17 litres	17 litres	18.5 litres
	Price From	£20,795 Ducati UK 00800 00382284 <a href="http://www.ducatiuk.com">www.ducatiuk.com</a>	£18,499 Yamaha UK 01932 358000 <a href="http://www.yamaha-motor.eu">www.yamaha-motor.eu</a>	£18,135 Aprilia UK 00800 15565500 <a href="http://www.uk.aprilia.com">www.uk.aprilia.com</a>





<b>Kawasaki H2</b>	<b>MV Agusta F3 800</b>	<b>Triumph Daytona 675R</b>	<b>Kawasaki ZX-10R</b>
998cc, I/c, 16v, DOHC, supercharged inline four 76 x 55mm 8.5:1 EFI, dual injectors, 50mm throttle bodies 193bhp @ 11,000rpm 125Nm @ 10,500rpm	798cc, I/c, 12v, DOHC, inline triple 79 x 54.3mm 13.3:1 EFI, dual injectors, 59mm throttle bodies 125.25bhp @ 13,000rpm 76Nm @ 10,800rpm	675cc, I/c, 12v, DOHC, inline triple 76 x 49.58mm 13.1:1 EFI, dual injectors 44mm throttle bodies 115bhp @ 12,800rpm 68Nm @ 10,100rpm	998cc, I/c, 16v, DOHC, inline four 76 x 55mm 13.0:1 EFI, dual injectors 47mm throttle bodies 175bhp @ 13,000rpm 102Nm @ 10,500rpm
Yes/ Three Yes, multi level Yes Yes Yes Yes, 3-levels	Yes/four Yes, 8-level Yes Yes Yes No	No/none No Yes Yes No No	Yes/three Yes Option No Yes No
High tensile steel trellis KYB 43mm AOD II fork, fully adj. KYB shock, fully adj. Four piston Brembo calipers, 330mm discs Two piston caliper, 250mm disc	AlS steel trellis Marzocchi 43mm forks, fully adj. Sachs shock, fully adj. Four piston radial calipers, 320mm discs Single piston caliper, 220mm disc	Aluminium twin spar Öhlins 43mm NIX30 forks, full adj. Öhlins TTX36 shock, fully adj. Four piston Brembo calipers, 310mm discs Single piston caliper, 220mm disc	Aluminium twin spar Showa 43mm BPF, fully adj. Showa horizontal shock, fully adj. Four piston radial calipers, 310mm Single piston caliper, 220mm disc
1,450mm 24.4 degrees/ 100mm 825mm 238kg 17 litres	1,380mm 23.6 degrees/ 99mm 805mm 173kg 16.5 litres	1,375mm 23.0 degrees/ 87.9mm 830mm 169kg 17.4 litres	1,425mm 25.0 degrees/ 107mm 813mm 198kg (kerb) 17 litres
£22,000 Kawasaki UK 01628 856750 <a href="http://www.kawasaki.co.uk">www.kawasaki.co.uk</a>	£11,899 Hampshire MV Agusta 023 9225 2020 <a href="http://www.hampshiremvagusta.co.uk">www.hampshiremvagusta.co.uk</a>	£10,949 Triumph UK 01455 251700 <a href="http://www.triumph.co.uk">www.triumph.co.uk</a>	£12,199 Kawasaki UK 01628 856750 <a href="http://www.kawasaki.co.uk">www.kawasaki.co.uk</a>

# Conclusion

**W**hen will this manic evolution and relentless charge of new technology ever end? What's next? Robot-powered bikes? Who knows, who cares? Another question, sir?

The overwhelming moral of 2015's Sportsbike of the Year test is that we're utterly spoilt for choice. Just a decade ago, there were half a dozen samey-samey four-pot litre bikes from Japan, along with a handful of rev-hungry 600s and a token (usually unreliable) European steed forming the buying options. Evolution is a wonderful thing, isn't it?

If you're lucky enough to walk around with pocket full of Benjamins looking for a bike, we envy you. Any one of these ten is a worthy shout (they wouldn't have made the cut otherwise) and, as previously cited, although the RRP's have taken a hike thanks to the economic malaise, the finance deals available make owning one far more affordable. It's like free money, innit?

Given the problems of the BMW, we're not going to rank it formally – but it ain't tenth. There has to be a wooden spoon, and the MV Agusta F4 RR and Ducati's 899 Panigale were spooning under Portimao's blankets for said carbon-based eating implement. Fundamentally a track-based test, the 899 claims the honour of tenth place for its pace at Portimao. Despite a

relative slating, it's important to note that the 899 feels epic at less committed speeds, which is why it's so adept on the highways.

As for the F4, it's riddled with too many flaws and idiosyncrasies to be a tangible option. Ninth it is. Personally, I think subjectivism can get in the way of being impartial when riding bikes like the F4. It does strange things to your senses, it's more fashion than function and adjectives like 'quirky' and 'characterful' don't cut it when describing sportsbikes any more.

If you're not fussed about lap times, or whether or not the whole bike works 100 per cent of the time, the F4 RR could be the kiddy. Similarly, if you like your ladies like you like your motorcycles (sexy, Italian, and constantly hard work), visit your local MV dealer and book a test ride – try MV Agusta Cheshire, the supplier of this beautiful bike. The new 'commercial partnership' between MV Agusta and AMG Mercedes is an intriguing one, and one that can only blossom and benefit the end user; hopefully in time for MV's all-new superbike coming very soon...

Eighth and seventh places were equally

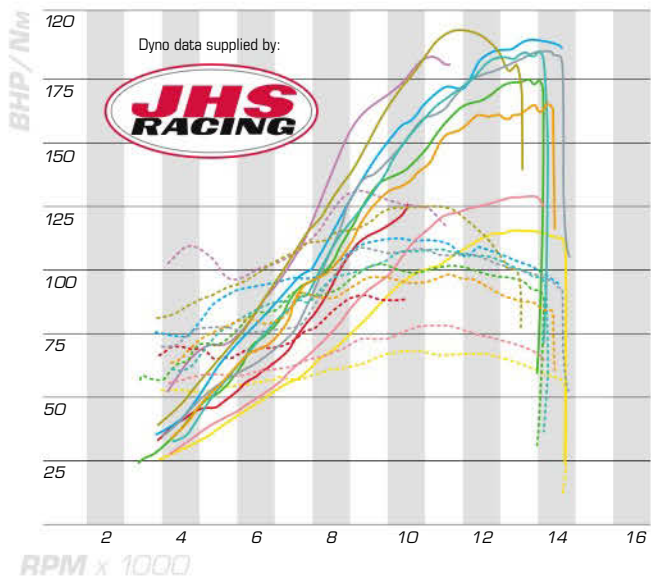


hard to nail, but the bikes couldn't be further apart in terms of existence and purpose. It may not brag the sheer pace and aptitude of the normally aspirated brigade, but fuck it, who cares? The H2 was (more than likely) never meant to be busting lap times. It's pure insanity, something completely different to the focused superbikes on offer, and we love it. On the road, you might as well hand your licence into the feds department at the dealership. Owning the H2 and riding it in the UK is like a monk having a foot-long cock. Still, I'd have one...

Just nipping seventh was the MV Agusta F3 800. It's difficult not to fall for its mesmerising charm, sound, epic handling 🍌



## POWER AND TORQUE



POWER ———  
TORQUE - - - - -

DUCATI 899 PANIGALE  
TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675R  
KAWASAKI ZX-10R  
MV AGUSTA F3 800  
MV AGUSTA F4 RR  
DUCATI 1299 PANIGALE S  
YAMAHA YZF-R1M  
APRILIA RSV4 RF  
BMW S 1000 RR  
KAWASAKI H2



Another year, another title.  
Congratulations to the awesome  
Aprilia RSV4 RF, SBOTY 2015 winner!

## THANKS TO:

Huge and massive thanks to the following for helping to make SBOTY happen. Ian from Speedycom.co.uk for the use of his delicious F4 RR. Check out the website for equally delicious aftermarket goodies. Brittany Ferries for helping us get overseas, and then back home. Gary Hartshorne and Bridgestone for superb tyres and being excellent SBOTY partners once again, cheers Ga! Paul Traylen for working his (smelly) socks off for us. JHS Racing for letting us use their dyno facilities and changing many tyres before we left. The Algarve circuit for being one of the best on the world, and being so accommodating. Bikeit.co.uk for brilliant tyre changing kit while in Portugal. All the manufacturers who lent us bikes. Ad Man Charles 'Charlie' Charles for being an excellent fuel mule. And finally Dan Blake, for making us laugh. Lots. You got home yet, Dan?

and punchy motor, but it ultimately hasn't yet got the complete package status and undoubted reliability of the Daytona 675R.

Next up is the ZX-10R. Based on recurring update patterns, we should see an all-new superbike from Kawasaki in 2016. In the meantime, if you're sold by racing on Sunday selling on Monday, the Ninja could be the tool. Otherwise, Kawasaki will stick to the sell on Saturday, race on Sunday policy it's doing so well with.

Claiming the final podium spot would have been a toss-up between the 1299 Panigale and the Beemer. Almost impossible to split, the

Ducati offers something totally unique but this time backs it up with bona fide speed, while the 2015 S1K is on the opposite of the superbike spectrum. There was something mystical surrounding the HP4. While the 2015 RR has more power and comes just as equipped, there's a slice of something absent. That said, the BMW is the by far the easiest 'big bike' on test. Whatever, the 1299 takes a well earned third, and we'll stick our neck out and say the BMW would have sat in fourth, what with its obvious potential.

As stated, the 2015 SBOTY crown was always between two bikes. It was a tenth

ahead here, and a tenth ahead there, but the Aprilia, once again, is Fast Bikes' Sportsbike of the Year. I want one. We all want one. And I bet Marco Melandri wishes he could have his old RSV4 back, too.

Despite huge improvements, there's always nagging preconceptions about reliability issues, and we're not going to pretend we haven't heard first-hand stories from FB readers, which is why Yamaha will sell 10 times as many R1s, and even R1Ms, as the RSV4. But in almost every aspect, it's simply a better bike – and the best you can possibly buy. Go on, you know you want to... **EB**





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WORDS: ROLAND BROWN PICS: ROLAND BROWN, TODD WILLIAMS, HONDA

# PIKES PEAK

## International Hill Climb



**R**aces don't come much more American than the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb. The "Race to the Clouds" up the 14,110ft (4,300m) high mountain in Colorado is big, brash and slightly mad; a blend of old and new, fast and not so fast bikes (and cars) being thrashed up a steep, snow-capped Rocky mountain in Colorado.

Pikes Peak was first run in 1916 and is the second oldest annual US motor sports event (behind only the Indianapolis 500); a legendary race that deserves a place on any sportbike rider's bucket list. It's basically a time trial up the Peak's only road; a narrow, 12.42-mile ribbon that was originally dirt and has only been all tarmac since 2012.

Bikes go first, mainly to reduce the danger from a preceding car running wide and leaving debris on the road. Not that there isn't plenty of danger remaining when you're scratching hard – after only a handful of practice runs – up a narrow mountain road with 156 mostly blind bends.

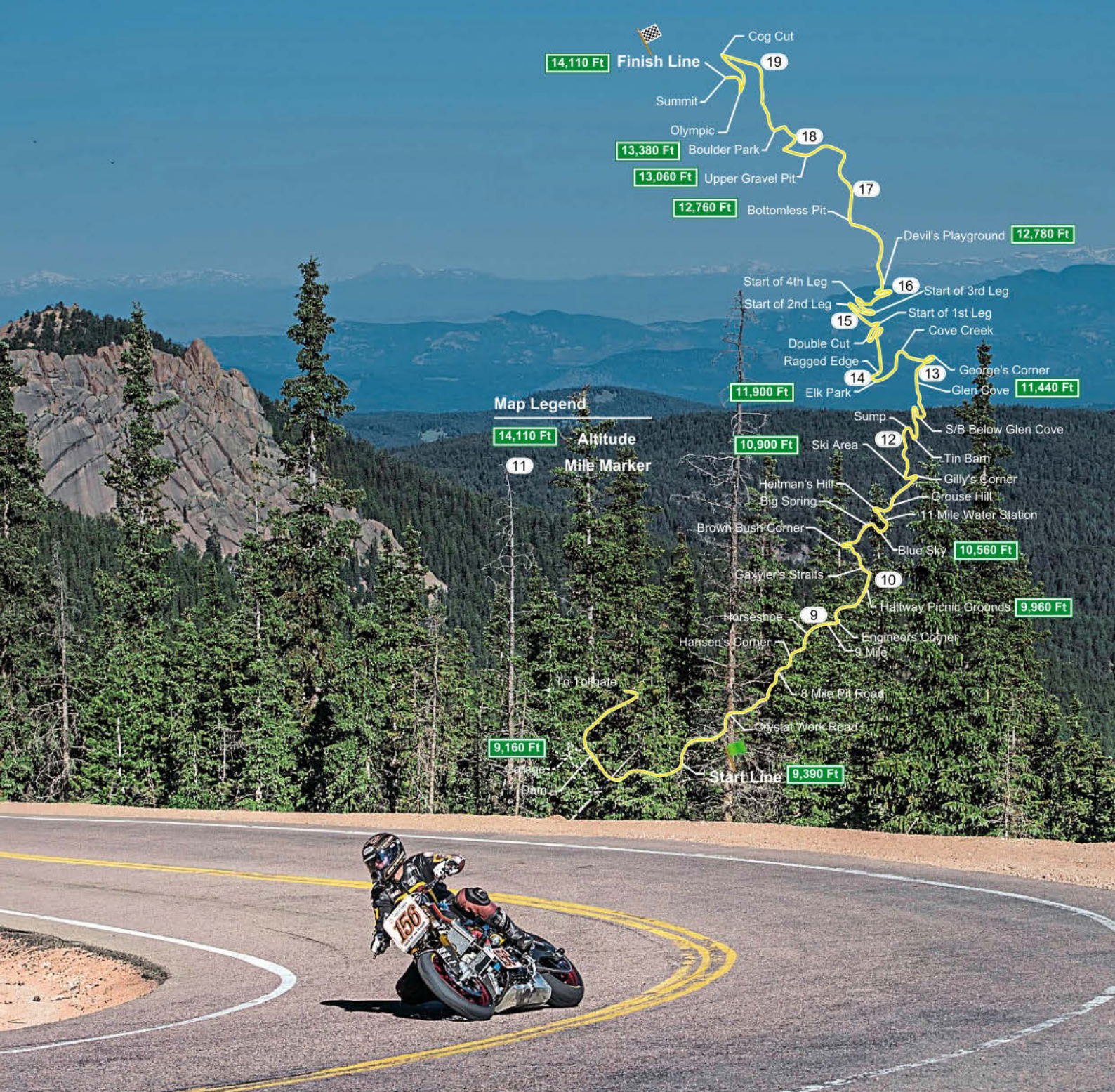
What makes the Peak especially American is that in some ways it's like the Isle of Man TT, but bigger and more extreme. A higher mountain, more breathtaking views (literally breathtaking, because the air at the top is so thin that some people get altitude sickness), and even more danger. Crash on some of those bends, and there's not even Armco to stop you going straight off the edge and falling so far that the locals say you'll starve before hitting the ground. For a flavour of how it used to be, though not for

normal mortals, check out YouTube for the jaw-dropping movie *Climb Dance* of Ari Vatanen in a Peugeot rally car.

What's not so big about Pikes Peak is that it all takes place on one June day every year, with bikes being finished by lunchtime; and that the level of riders and machinery is not so high. There are very few works bikes or pro racers here. The atmosphere is friendly, more like a club race, with added spice from the occasional factory or importer-backed entry, such as this year's Victory Project 156 or the Ducati USA-supported Multistrada efforts that took several wins in recent years.

Years ago the bikes were all off-landers; more recently, when some dirt sections remained, a high-barred all-rounder such as the Multi was arguably the ideal





compromise. These days the surface favours a sports bike, so the entry list included S 1000 RRs, GSX-R600s and Honda CBRs. These dominated the time-sheets after practice, which takes place in the preceding week on sections of the track. The only time competitors ride the whole course is on race day.

There are classes for prototypes, electric bikes and classics as well as open-classes and middleweights. A couple of years ago Californian racer and Ducati dealer Carlin Dunne, who'd previously won on a Multistrada, set the outright fastest time on the electric Lightning LS-218 which, unlike its petrol-powered rivals, retained full performance all the way up, rather than steadily losing up to a third of its power as it climbed.

Just riding up the Peak at a reasonably brisk pace is enough to bring home how hardcore this race is. Even by Alpine standards the scenery is stunning. The mountain's only road winds through the pine trees for several miles before the start – just a banner over the road, above a couple of timing wires; though on race day the surrounding area is rammed with vehicles including numerous bike teams' vans plus some very fancy cars.

After blasting away from the line the competitors ride through trees for about half of the course, cranking left and right as the road rises at an average of over seven per cent. Some bends, like the right-hander Brown Bush, Tin Barn and George's Corner, are slow-speed hairpins,

but there aren't many that you'd fancy falling off on. Most are lined by rock wall, Armco or forest, with the roadside pine trees often appearing short enough to signify that the hillside drops away very steeply.

Eventually, you've climbed high enough to be above the tree-line, the air already much colder – in places the road is lined with snow. In others it's lined by nothing at all – just endless views to more Rocky Mountain ranges in the far, clear distance, and scarily sheer drops if you get it wrong. Tragically, Ducati 848 rider Carl Sorensen did just that in practice, and didn't survive the fall. (A rider died last year too, ironically after getting a tank-slapper as he celebrated crossing the finish line.) 🏍️



Surprisingly, Sorensen was only the sixth fatality in the event's 99-year-history. (This was the 93rd running, a few years having been missed). The higher cornering speeds possible since the course was paved must make it more dangerous, because the run-off certainly hasn't been increased. Hopefully that doesn't mean the fatality rate will stay high in future years.

The whole road is a great ride at a quick-but-sane pace, or even at a slow enough speed to allow appreciation of those amazing views. Up at the chilly top the air is so thin that even a minor exertion soon becomes an effort. There's a café and souvenir shop, which the competitors are glad of because after finishing your run on race day you're stuck there until they re-open the road when everyone is finished. Guy Martin, who competed here last year on his Spondon-framed special, reportedly stuffed a book down his leathers so he'd have something (apart from scoffing the excellent donuts) to do after finishing.

Spectating is an eye-opener because, in a country that in many respects is safety-obsessed and litigious, some of the places you're encouraged to watch from seem surprisingly vulnerable. In places, the crowd is behind a thin barrier on the outside of a turn, just feet from speeding bikes and cars. And in this land of commercialism you can watch for free, after paying a small charge to get into the Pikes Peak park.

This year's race saw victory for the favourite, disappointment for the most high-profile entry, and a decent performance by a Brit. The winner was Californian-based Jeff Tigert, who was also fastest in practice on his Fireblade. Tigert crossed the line in 10 minutes 2.735 secs,

averaging almost 70mph to win by just under 16 seconds from local rider Travis Newbold, aboard a Buell-engined Ronin V-twin.

The highest profile entry was Victory's Project 156, ridden by Cycle World journalist Don Canet. He set a hot pace on the first section before crashing, remounting but failing to make the finish. British rider Jamie Robinson, the former GP racer who's now a US-based bike journo, finished fourth overall on a Multistrada that he'd ridden all the way from Los Angeles, and was planning to ride back again.

Behind him came an array of mostly American riders on bikes ranging from a French-built Voxan roadster, via various hotted-up streetbikes, to a classic Triumph twin and even a few quads and a couple of sidecars. After the cars had been up, interrupted by a violent hail storm that ended as suddenly as it had begun, all the competitors slowly wound their way back down the hill, halting every so often for burn-outs, and accompanied by much enthusiastic high-fiving from spectators lining the route.



A lot of varied bikes tackle the Peak



Power wheelies always look cool...

The competitors' courage can't be doubted although, to be brutally honest, Pikes Peak is not the world's most exciting race to watch. There's a gap of several minutes between each competitor, which was difficult to understand because they were generally set off with the fastest qualifier first. Despite some distinctly shaky lines – not surprisingly given the number of turns and lack of practice – it's very rare for riders to be caught, let alone passed.

But it's a fantastic event, due most of all to the sheer magnificence of the scenery and the ride to the top. I'd go back like a shot, at any time not just on that one day every June. Competing there is a very different matter, at least if by that you mean giving it a serious go, not just fast-touring to the top. The Race to the Clouds is historic, spectacular, quintessentially American, cruelly unforgiving, and definitely something that every motorcyclist should experience at least once. **EB**



That's a lot of High-Fives!



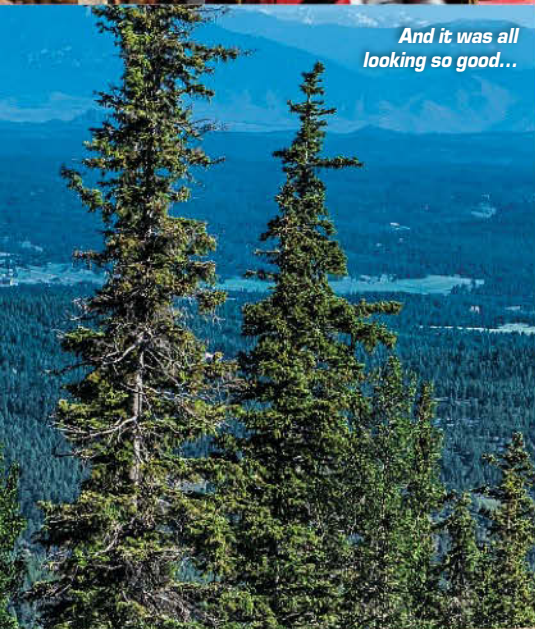
“ IN A COUNTRY THAT’S IN MANY RESPECTS SAFETY-OBSSESSED AND LITIGIOUS, SPECTATING AT THE PEAK IS EYE-OPENING... ”



The winner!



Old FB boy Jamie Robinson had a crack!



And it was all looking so good...



## Victory's Project 156

The highest profile bike entry at this year's Pike's Peak – by a long way – was the Victory prototype that was ridden by Cycle World racer/journalist Don Canet. Powered by a liquid-cooled V-twin motor and built by Roland Sands Design, it was a classy looking naked weapon that could form the basis for a future streetbike from Victory, which is repositioning itself as the American performance brand.

Victory were pretty cagey with details about Project 156 (named after the race's number of bends), and especially about its factory-supplied powerplant, which was based on the 1,133cc Scout unit. The dohc, eight-valve unit makes 100bhp in standard form, and a fair bit more when tuned with titanium valves, a sweet-sounding RSD pipe and a substantially enlarged carbon-fibre airbox, allowed by the small fuel tank's location under the motor.

Roland Sands Design built the bike around a steel-tube frame of their own design and construction, using an 899 Panigale swing-arm (and roughly similar geometry to the Ducati), Öhlins suspension, Brembo brakes

and the firm's own wheels. Then, with less than a week to go before the race, they built it again, after Canet crashed in practice and the bike slammed into the Armco, badly damaging the frame. Luckily the rider was unhurt after losing the front on a fast right-hander, the tyre having cooled on the short, high-altitude practice run.

The bike was rebuilt just in time for the race, and Canet started fast, setting the day's second-quickest time on the first section. But he lost the front when crossing the white line at Brown Bush, a right-hand hairpin. He kept the engine running, losing less than half a minute, and was back on the pace in the third section, but the bike cut out near the top with an electrical or fuelling problem, ending the run.

So Victory's big effort ended in disappointment, but hopefully that was not the end of Project 156. Questions about a future production version were met with a "no comment" but the firm seems keen to return to Pike's Peak next year – by which time a naked V-twin streetbike, along roughly similar lines, might well be close to reality.

Awesome looking thing, we want two please!





*addiction*

CHRIS SMITH'S

# DUCATI 899 PANIGALE

Looks like a fancy 1199, right? Look again.  
This is no ordinary superbike, this is the 899  
Panigale with its glad rags on!


PHOTOGRAPHY:  
JAN GLOVEC



**H**aving previously owned a Harley, as well as having modified every car I'd owned in past, there wasn't much chance the 899 would stay stock. From the moment I bought the bike I had an idea of what I wanted to create, something unique. However, the result surpassed even my expectations thanks to the brilliance, passion and attention to detail of Anthony at Corse Motorcycles.

The bike has been a collaborative project between Ant at Corse, my good mate Nat and I with all of us contributing ideas. Our starting point was an already fairly sexy Italian, but we wanted to turn this stock bike into almost a homage to all the previous Ducati's we all loved.

The tank design is our take on the lip smackingly beautiful 1199R, with the addition of custom 899 decals. Given the tank on the 1199R is aluminium we weren't sure how the metal 899 tank would turn out, but as you can see there was no need to worry. The fairings are prepared in an 1199 tricolour style with the very bottom and under the headlights blacked out. The exhaust was painstakingly unpacked and also anodised black, it was laser etched to add some detail with the exhaust piping under the seat heat-wrapped.

The final touch was a lot of carbon and Ducati performance parts – along with a single sided swingarm. When one turned up on eBay the bike was complete. 





*addiction*

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## MODIFICATIONS

### CHRIS SMITH'S 2014 DUCATI 899 PANIGALE

#### ENGINE

Termignoni Exhaust – anodised black  
and laser etched

#### CHASSIS

Öhlins Black Front Forks  
Öhlins Steering Dampner  
Marchesini Racing aluminium rims  
1199 single sided swingarm  
Billet footpegs  
1199R style tank

#### AESTHETICS

Ducati Performance (DP) tail tidy  
DP seat  
DP levers  
DP billet fuel cap  
DP bar ends  
DP tinted screen  
DP clutch and brake reservoirs  
DP passenger seat cover  
Aluminium radiator guard  
DP 1199 clutch cover – modified to fit  
1199 LED headlights  
Rizoma integrated rear turn signals  
Carbon fibre front fender  
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# TEN MINUTES WITH... NOEL JOHNSTON

**Noel Johnston has the daunting task of being Clerk of the Course at the world's fastest road race – the Ulster Grand Prix**

**You've caught me at a busy time.**

I'm flat out because rider entry closes next week. I've got two phones on the go with riders calling about the event, so I'm trying to sort everyone out. They go to the North West and TT and then start thinking about the Ulster Grand Prix, so the phone never stops.

**My role is to ensure a safe race week for riders and fans alike.**

And the job starts more or less after the racing stops on Saturday. We have debriefs immediately after on every aspect of the event while things are fresh. Then we have a few weeks off, but after that it's a case of going through the suggestions to improve things one by one. So we'll look at any incidents and see if anything can be improved. Safety is paramount at the end of the day.

**So we've learnt from the incidents last year.**

We'll have some more prohibited areas for spectators after what happened. These happened on parts of the course where they've never happened before, but now I have to do my job and ensure that history doesn't repeat itself. That's how the event progresses.

**We don't want to turn it into Donington Park.**

But we have to be safe. This is the fastest race in the world, but my job is all about safety. At the end of the day I'd rather racers won at the slowest speed possible, but you know what racers are like! If Bruce Anstey gets out on the right side of bed, he goes for it, and that's that. Lap records are there to be broken.

**We had a chicane in 2002 before the start and finish.**

It didn't work very well and the riders didn't like it. If we have a problem at a corner we'll look to improve run off. Look at any chicane in the world and that's where you get clusters of accidents. We've kept Dundrod fast and flowing, and that helps with safety.

**Riders have to race safely.**

I brief everyone that we want a safe meeting. Riders new to the course get taken round in a coach with experienced riders passing on their track knowledge. I want them to enjoy the racing, build their speed up and not scare themselves or end up in a hedge. If we see any rider that isn't riding safely I'd have no hesitation in sending them home. The event is bigger than anyone at the end of the day.

**2008 was a washout.**

That brought massive financial pressure on the club. It took a while to pick up the pieces from that event. But you're dealt with whatever weather on the day. The fans from the UK will come whatever the weather, but a nice sunny day brings out the locals from the area. On the Saturday we have 12 hours of road closure, so that's enough time to fit the racing programme in even if we get some rain. And then there's also the racing on Thursday.

**I go over to the TT.**

When I'm over there, I'm wearing two hats. I'm a fan of the racing, but I'm also out there looking at riders. I'll decide on whether riders are coping well at the TT. If a rider goes well at the TT, they normally get on at Dundrod.

**The course is on the top of the list of most riders.**

They just love it. It's a dream for most of them. We get a lot of riders come and can't believe they've not raced here before, it's that good. It's very different to the North West, but then it's a race on a TT-type course as opposed to a time trial. It's got everything. The North West has got the straights and chicanes, but here you've got so many technical challenges. Guy Martin loves the place and has always gone well here, but Bruce Anstey is amazing round here too.

**I just want an incident free, rain free day.**

Before the racing starts I have to satisfy myself that I've done everything possible to make the racing as safe as possible. I can enjoy everything afterwards, but at the time it's a different thing altogether.


**I used to live closer to the track before.**

And I've got a lot of memories of enjoying the racing up until 2002 when I took over as Clerk of the Course. One of the best days was the Joey Dunlop and David Jefferies battle in 1999.

**The crowd just love the racing.**

They root for the locals, but you've also got everyone loving Bruce, there's plenty of Guy Martin fans too. But whoever's leading on the last lap gets the programmes waved at them regardless.

**I'd choose to watch at the final section.**

From the Flowbog crossroads, through Quarry to the start and finish, that's my favourite section. There's no better place in the world. 



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**75** USED BIKE GUIDE: APRILIA RSV-R FACTORY

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It's fair to say that it's been a very exciting month at FB HQ!

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# Used Bike Guide

## STARSHIP TROOPER

Twin pipes and a rear end right out of Star Trek, you just have to love the 2004 Aprilia RSV-R Factory

**T**here are so many reasons to adore Aprilia's Mille range of sportsbikes. Not only were these the bikes that first brought V-twin Italian exotica to the masses, they also made Öhlins suspension and Brembo brakes a household name when the RSV-R model arrived in 2000. But by 2004 Aprilia were starting to drop behind the game.

After an initial rush of popularity, due to the fact that both RSV models were considerably cheaper, and more reliable, than the Ducati 996/998, sales of the Mille were beginning to slow. Exotic rivals such as the Benelli Tornado Tre and MV F4 had arrived on the scene, while the old sparring partner from Bologna had upped its game with the Ducati 999. And it wasn't just Europe responding, the Japanese were starting to fight back with updated inline four litre bikes. Aprilia needed to inject a new lease of life into the Mille to keep it competitive – and in 2004 we rejoiced when a completely new model arrived.

Somewhat confusingly for fans of the old Mille, the new base model bike was now called the RSV-R while the higher spec



**PRICE GUIDE:** £4,000 – £5,500

**Cheapest private:** £4,200  
13,800 miles, stealth black with FSH and Aprilia Racing exhausts.

**Our choice private:** £4,495  
20,000 miles, 2006 Factory in superb condition with extras and FSH.

**Cheapest dealer:** £3,999  
20,000 miles, Cat D bike with loads of extras

**Our choice dealer:** £4,990  
18,500 miles, FSH and fitted with a full race exhaust



version was the RSV-R Factory.

Naming aside, Aprilia kept with tradition and both bikes shared a similar chassis (the Factory's was painted black while the stock model left aluminium), identical engine and the same fairing and clocks. As before, the higher spec Factory bike gained Öhlins suspension, Brembo radial brakes and lightweight OZ wheels, but in the fine tradition of Mille models, you got all this extra bling for a very reasonable price. In 2004 the stock RSV-R was £8499 while the fully-loaded Factory version added just £2,200 onto this at £10,699. When you consider the Ducati 999S, Benelli Tre and MV F4 750S were all £12k, the Mille Factory was one hell of a bargain. But did it have the same exclusivity as its rivals?

This was the biggest hurdle that Aprilia needed to get over with the new RSV-R models and you have to say they did their very best to respond to this criticism. As well as completely revising the engine to become the more powerful 'V60 Magnesium' model, as its name suggested, it also gained magnesium covers to add a bit of exclusivity. Then, at a time when Ducati was struggling to overcome criticism about the controversial 999, Aprilia gave the RSV-R a fresh and modern look that was unique, but thankfully not overly odd.

The twin pipes were cool and a huge improvement over the old model's single dustbin of a can, the huge central air scoop gave the RSV-R a menacing and racy look, the back end was stylish and sophisticated and even the paint schemes were decent. The fact the RSV's new styling was done by a Scot who also worked on the Audi TT showed. But, most importantly of all, the new RSV-R also rode well.

As well as being slimmer and less top heavy than before, Aprilia refined the overall balance of the Mille to make it a far more accomplished road and track bike. While at first it does have a strange feeling about it, when you click into 'Aprilia' 🏍

## MILEAGE

Some 2004/05 bikes had an odd quirk where the mileage would re-set itself if the battery was disconnected. Be wary of any suspiciously low mileage bikes and check old MOT certificates for proof if unsure.

## RECALL

Early 2004/05 models were recalled due to the swingarm cracking around a well-nut on the left hand inner side. Aprilia changed the whole swingarm and most bikes should have had this done but it is worth double checking to be on the safe side.

## CRASH DAMAGE

RSVs don't crash well and the twin pipes are often pushed into the swingarm and the pegs into the frame, causing the bike to be an insurance write off. For this reason there are a lot of quite cheap Cat-D examples out there. Always inspect these areas well for any signs of even light accident damage.



ENGINE	Type	998cc, liquid-cooled, 8v, 60-degree V-twin
	Bore x stroke	97mm x 67.5mm
	Compression	11.8:1
	Fuelling	EFI
	Tested Power	118bhp @ 10,000rpm
	Tested Torque	101Nm @ 8,600rpm
CHASSIS	Frame	Aluminium twin spar
	F Suspension	43mm inverted forks, fully-adjustable (Öhlins on Factory & post-2006 models)
	R suspension	Monoshock, fully-adjustable (Öhlins on Factory)
	Front brakes	Four-piston Brembo radial calipers, 320mm discs
	Rear brake	Two-piston Brembo caliper, 220mm disc

DIMENSIONS	Wheelbase	1,418mm
	Seat Height	810mm
	Dry Weight	185kg
	Fuel Capacity	18-litres
SPEED	0-60	3.68 sec
	0-100	n/a
	0-120	18.51 sec
	Stg ¼ mile	11.52sec @ 130.67mph
	Standing mile	n/a
	Top speed	168.3mph

## REAR BRAKE

The rear brake's master cylinder is positioned horizontally, causing air to bleed into the system and leading to a loss of braking performance. It's bad design and the only fix is to relocate the master cylinder through a set of aftermarket rearsets. The hydraulic clutch also likes to allow a bit of air into its system and benefits from regular bleeding.



## ELECTRICS

The stator can be a little suspect on the RSV and it is worth checking with a multimeter to ensure it is functioning. With the engine running the battery should read 14.5v across it, if this is significantly lower factor in around £150 to get the stator re-wound – and get haggling!

## MODEL UPDATE

In 2006 the V90RR engine was updated and gained 2mm larger exhaust valves, a revised exhaust system and 4bhp more power. The stock RSV-R also inherited the Factory's Öhlins forks and Brembo radial calipers in the update. To celebrate the new model, Aprilia painted the Factory's frame a hideous gold colour. A decision that was thankfully reversed the next year...



## BALANCE

It is essential to get the RSV's fuel-injection system balanced by an Aprilia specialist using the correct diagnostic kit. If this isn't done the bike will have a very snatchy throttle response and will fuel terribly. To properly balance the bodies the 5mm Allen bolts need to be removed from the exhaust, if they haven't been out then the dealer hasn't used the proper bit of diagnostic kit.

## SPRAG CLUTCH

The sprag clutch is the Achilles' Heel of any big V-twin and the RSV is no exception. Listen out for a squeaking or clattering sound when the starter is pushed. Fitting a new sprag clutch costs in the region of £300, provided nothing else within the motor has been damaged...

## FORKS

The Factory's Öhlins forks don't like to be left standing and will leak if not used for a while. Often a bit of use cures this, however, if a seal has gone expect a £200 bill to get them sorted. Check with a bit of cloth for leaks and also inspect the fork's pinch bolts as these are often over-tightened, causing the leg to crack.

## BATTERY

Aprilia recommend a 90CCA battery, but fitting a 230CCA unit will protect your sprag clutch and is an essential modification. Owners of the 2004/05 bike are also advised to uprate the starter solenoid to a later model's 150AMP unit.





Sleek, sexy and silly money!

## RUNNING COSTS

Service interval:	
Minor:	4,000m
Major:	8,000m
Valve clearances:	16,000m

Service costs:	
Minor:	£235.00
Major:	£335.00
Valve clearances:	£400.00

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mode it's an absolute joy to ride. Unlike the slightly lazy handling Ducati, the RSV-R is sharp and responsive, yet still actually very relaxing to ride thanks to a roomy riding position. Despite being set slightly on the firm side for gentle use, when worked hard the Factory model's Öhlins suspension is typically impressive and combined with the lightweight OZ wheels makes for a delightfully plush ride. Then, when you need to throw out the anchors, the radial Brembo brakes are fiercely strong in their performance, while also hissing in a very pleasing way. And, thanks to the thumping power delivery of the new engine, they will be called into action more often than you'd think.

True, modern V-twins are now pushing on for 200bhp, which makes the RSV-R's claimed 118bhp seem a little paltry, but that's not the whole story. This is a bike that is happy to top 168mph, so it's hardly a slouch. If you want a bit more grunt just drop the gearing (15/42 works best) or gain a few bhp through the airbox modification, neither of which will break the bank. However, the best use of your money is to get the throttle bodies balanced and the bike nicely set-up. Do this and the RSV-R Factory is guaranteed to win you over. Not only will its booming exhaust note send shivers down your spine on every ride, the free revving engine is thrilling in a way that a lazy Ducati 90-degree V-twin can never be – and the handling more than a match for any rival bike of its era. And quite a few that came out after it, for that matter... **EB**

## ALSO CONSIDER THESE:

### DUCATI 999S

2004

**Private** £5,000  
**Dealer** £5,500  
Initially unfairly ignored due to its controversial styling, the 999 is now back in fashion and prices are high. A great bike, but a costly one to buy and run.

<b>Engine</b>	998cc, l/c, 8v, V-twin
<b>Power</b>	120bhp @ 12,800rpm
<b>Torque</b>	84Nm @ 10,200rpm



### HONDA SP-2

2004

**Private** £6,000  
**Dealer** £7,000  
Like the 999, the SP-2 is going through a revival. It is considerably better than the SP-1 and comes with typical Honda reliability and build quality.

<b>Engine</b>	999cc, l/c, 8v, V-twin
<b>Power</b>	127bhp @ 9,850rpm
<b>Torque</b>	99Nm @ 7,850rpm



### APRILIA RSV-R

2004

**Private** £3,500  
**Dealer** £4,000  
The stock RSV-R model doesn't have the Factory's OZ wheels or Öhlins suspension, but it has the same engine and costs around a grand less. these days.

<b>Engine</b>	998cc, l/c, 8v, V-twin
<b>Power</b>	118bhp @ 10,000rpm
<b>Torque</b>	101Nm @ 8,600rpm



## Verdict 8/10

Calling the RSV-R Factory the working man's Ducati is a bit harsh. It's a brilliant bike in its own right and unbelievable value when compared to its rivals.

- + PRICE, SPECIFICATION, RELIABILITY
- LACKS SOME EXCLUSIVITY COMPARED TO ITS RIVALS, ERGONOMICS



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WORDS: ROOTSY PICS: FB ARCHIVE

# BRAND OF BROTHERS SUZUKI

Suzuki has always attracted the madding crowd, so why don't you join them!

**T**here was a time when Suzuki ruled the waves. With the GSX-R range conquering all its rivals, the Hamamatsu factory merely had to punt out bikes from the mighty Hayabusa to the more humble V-Strom to ensure dealers stuck in a revolving door to the showroom.

The last few years, however, have been less kind, with ambitions reined in and the hedonism of earlier models rejected in favour of real world pragmatism. But at least that means that the second hand market is full of ripe goodies, ready for you to pluck from the heaving branches. Owners are typically the ride 'em hard type, meaning that servicing may not have been front of mind. Add to this that general finish is a notch down from some of its Japanese rivals and that means that you'll need to go over any used prospect with a fine-toothed comb. But there are gems out there, and many go for peanuts, so be patient, go for the goodies and be rewarded with one hell of a ride.



## 2007 GSX-R1000

**WHY YOU NEED ONE: ONLY RACERS NEED ELECTRONICS**

**PRICES: £4,500 STARTS THE HAGGLING**

Now near legendary status, the K5 version of Suzuki's flagship brand is the obvious choice for discerning riders – but that is to ignore the subtle advances made on the next generation machine – the K7. True, emissions laws robbed the K7 of some of its potency, but the GSX-R gained in other departments. Plus the rapidly approaching classic status of the K5 is driving prices northward, while the K7 is left lagging in

the showroom. The big news for the model was that it gained, rather than lost, weight. This was down to the exhaust having to accommodate components to slay emissions, thus Suzuki plumping for the two-pipe option, but stick on a new full system and the bike really is ready to take on anything. Peak power was up, but midrange figures were lighter than with the K5. The new model also had the new S-DMS power-

mode system on it, meaning three different engine maps could be switched between. Chassis changes were light, which given the K5's ability to craft its way through a curve this is no bad thing. While the motor is bullet-proof in standard form (and even with a full system and Power Commander), the finish of the Gixer can get shabby over the years if its not looked after. Brake discs, a usual Suzuki bugbear, can still warp with hard use, and watch out for any ex-race or track bikes creeping back into the road market. But they make an awesome tool!



**1999 GSX1300R HAYABUSA****WHY YOU NEED ONE: POWER!****PRICES: STILL £3K...***One hell of a bird of prey...*

The world became a different place in 1999 after Suzuki released the GSX1300R to an unsuspecting public – but by the end of the first generation's production over 100,000 had been sold! Immediately stealing the crown of the fastest production bike in the world (by a massive margin over the Honda Blackbird), Suzuki had to govern the bike's top speed the year after to abide by the manufacturer agreement to limit speeds to a paltry 186mph (300kph). But to focus on the Hayabusa's top speed would be to ignore the bike's many other qualities. The 1,299cc motor was conventional (but huge), and it was no surprise to see dynos being bothered by figures of around 170bhp.

The chassis was just about capable of keeping everything pointing in the right direction. Again, it was all conventional stuff, but quality kit in the braking and suspension departments ensured that the bike could be ridden almost as hard as a thoroughbred sportsbike. Many bikes had turbos or superchargers fitted – bored or stroked too – some have been kitted out with quality ancillaries, while others have bumbled around crossing continents in relative comfort. A few issues, such as the sprag clutch failing or the 1999 aluminium subframe being overloaded, should all be ironed out by now, so buying a 'Busa should be a relatively straight forward procedure.

**2003 SV650S****WHY YOU NEED ONE: YOU LOVE TO PLAY DAVID VS GOLIATH...****PRICES: £1,200 FOR A RATTY 2ND GEN BIKE, £2K FOR A CLEAN ONE**

Not everyone has ten grand to stick down on a new bike, so if you've only got one or two of them to play with then the SV has got to be your leading contender. The first version was a belter; carbed, rounded and simply equipped. Styling was clearly aimed for you to associate the SV with the TL1000S, but it was the SV that has had the longer legacy. The 2003 SV1000 pointed to the looks of the second generation bike; this time fuel injected, more angular and blessed with a new pressure-cast aluminium frame. Suzuki introduced little changes over the years, with the 2007 model given dual spark plugs on each cylinder. Knocking out 70-odd bhp, a few more horses can be teased out with the use of a free-flowing can without stressing the motor, while the chassis laps up suspension upgrades over the preload adjustable only stock Kayaba stuff. Reliability is great, usability even better, meaning whatever you use the SV for, it'll respond in magical fashion.

*Simple, but so effective...*



**1998 TL 1000R****WHY YOU NEED ONE:****PLASTIC IS FANTASTIC****PRICES: £2,000 KICKS THINGS OFF. LESS FOR A PROJECT**

Looking for something completely leftfield, a bike that really shouldn't make sense? You're after a TL1000R! Some are touting the bike as a modern classic, but that's overstating things somewhat. But there is an enthusiastic community of owners out there who have turned them into something approaching what the bike's potential suggested. Lopping the weight off the bike (which costs money, it's as simple as that), and improving the handling are where your efforts should be focused. Get this right and the bike can be a missile, something really special. The motor's got a bit of wriggle room in it so you can get it up towards 130bhp without too much trouble. The bike isn't without its woes, especially given its age now. Check that you've got the right motor in it as the S motor fits, but offers less punch. Tired suspension, cracked panels, solid bearings, starting problems can afflict the more neglected bikes, so take more interest in the guy selling it.

*Yellow. Not mellow...***2004 GSX-R600****WHY: STILL BANG ON IT!****PRICE: FETCHING OVER THREE GRAND**

You could pick a GSX-R600 of almost any vintage and say the same things about it – fast, fun and properly fruity. There are better versions than the K4 bike, but these come with a premium over this version. Cracking bike.

*Rampant on track...***2003 SV1000****WHY: BEING ON THE EDGE ISN'T YOUR THING, BUT YOU STILL WANT THRILLS****PRICE: EARLY MODELS GO FOR WELL UNDER TWO GRAND...**

The SV's bigger brother is a cracker of a bike, albeit with angular looks that don't flick everyone's switches. Using a revised TL1000S motor, there's plenty of grunt throughout the range, and stick a set of cans on them and they sound ace.

**2011 GSR750****WHY: YOU HAVE TO GET TO WORK SIMPLY****PRICE: YOU'LL BE LUCKY TO GET ONE UNDER £4K**

A naked GSX-R750 it is not, but the GSR750 does have its merits – those being a smart naked that with a little bit of love can be transformed into a proper little racer. Or have a blast on it on the commute, it's your choice.

**2007 B-KING****WHY: GOOD QUESTION. ER, WHY NOT!****PRICE: OVER £6K IN THE SHOWROOMS**

Forgive the B-King for not being the supercharged beast that Suzuki initially promised, and celebrate the fact that Suzuki packed a Hayabusa motor into a radically-looking chassis. It goes like a bomb and handles pretty well, while the build quality bucks the trend by being top notch. Prices are still strong, as owners don't like to let go of them!





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# Riding

Getting from where Marquez is to where Iannone is takes some serious skill at speed...



WORDS: KEITH CODE  
PICS: DUCATI/CSS/FB ARCHIVE



THE CALIFORNIA SUPERBIKE SCHOOL

Founded by the legendary Keith Code in 1980, the California Superbike School offers a step-by-step method of technique oriented rider training in the art of cornering motorcycles. Over the past 30 years hundreds of thousands of students have improved their riding skills and cornering capabilities at CSS and their team of professional coaches are dedicated to your improvement.

## TIME TO TALK TRANSITIONS

AKA the challenge of switchbacks, chicanes and esses...

**M**aking a single turn on a motorcycle is complicated enough; linking two or more corners in succession is even more challenging because you have to manage not only the corners but the transitions between the corners, too. It's a real feat of coordination to get these transitions just right. Quick-steering transitions, like what you encounter in switchbacks,

chicanes, and esses are a necessary skill because as your speed increases turning quickly isn't optional – you'll run wide if you don't. When done correctly, quick transitions can be properly good fun. Going from full lean in one direction to full lean in the other direction in linked corners is a genuine rush.

In switchbacks or other linked turns, properly timing the throttle and steering inputs is crucial. Accelerating out of the first turn, dipping the gas, 'flicking' it over to the other side, then getting back on gas is the common sequence. The faster you go the more fluid and precise that control sequence must be. As speed increases, a proportionately greater amount of bar pressure is required to flick the bike into the corner, making the required handlebar input almost abrupt.

Learning how to correctly move around on the bike is essential. Many riders tend to use the handlebars to pull themselves from one side of the bike to the other, creating conflicting forces – one force applied in a forward

motion to steer the bike and another force applied in a twisting motion to move the rider across the bike. The rider may also be supporting his or her upper body with the arms, additionally restraining the bars. With the bars multitasking to steer, move the rider across the seat, maintain side-to-side balance, and support the torso, accurate throttle control and precise steering inputs are all but impossible to manage.

What happens then? The rider becomes frustrated by his or her clumsy riding or worse; 'headshake' or other manifestations of bike instability appear. Headshake describes a sharp back-and-forth motion of the bars. The most violent form of headshake, when the fork rotates from steering stop to steering stop, is sometimes called a tankslapper because it looks like your hands are slapping the fuel tank. Headshake is especially a risk in quick transitions where the front wheel becomes light as the bike rolls up and over on its side-to-side arc. This becomes worse



CONTACT CSS TO BOOK: TEL 08700 671061 EMAIL [INFO@SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK](mailto:INFO@SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK) WEB [WWW.SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK](http://WWW.SUPERBIKESCHOOL.CO.UK)





Got a riding question - either on the track or on the road? Want the CSS team to help? Just drop us a line and we'll get it answered for you. [letters@fastbikesmag.com](mailto:letters@fastbikesmag.com)



ALL THE CSS COACHES HAVE SPENT YEARS HONING THEIR RIDING, AND ARE PERFECTLY PLACED TO ANSWER YOUR RIDING QUESTIONS. SO DON'T BE SHY, ASK AWAY!

when acceleration is added to the picture; the wheel can even leave the ground. You can't steer effectively with the front wheel off the ground, and if the front tyre comes back to the ground at an off-angle, headshake will result.

Experiencing any degree of headshake or wobble in transitions, most riders become hesitant to speed up, thinking it's probably only going to make things worse. Slowing down can seem to be the only remedy. It's logical – but not necessarily accurate – to believe you've hit some limit in either your riding skill or the bike's capabilities. Bumping up against the bike's limits is possible. More likely, though, the rider is creating the disharmony with conflicting bar inputs. Under these conditions, bike stability and rider stability are always connected. When the rider uses the bars for stability it transfers directly to the bike and creates instability, regardless of speed.

Learning to be less invasive while maintaining your connection to the bike is the best and easiest way to increase stability through quick-turning transitions. Conflicting bar inputs create instability and prevent precise steering and smooth throttle activation. Anchoring your lower body by squeezing the tank with your knees to stabilise yourself is one technique that works to eliminate instability. This may not be the entire solution, but offers a starting point for lessening this often-vexing problem. KC



Big girls appreciate it more, they say...

## NO MORE HEROES

**Q** I have a Hayabusa and have been told I am close to running out of ground clearance in corners. The last thing I want is to ground out the exhausts, but how do I know when I'm at the limit?

**Terry, Daventry**

**A** Quite often a bike will have footrests or little extensions on the footrests (hero blobs) that are designed to touch down first which will give you an early warning, but let's see if you could get less lean angle for the speed you have at the moment. I see a lot of riders trying to straighten out the turns by, in a right hander, for example, starting on the left, going tight to the right and exiting on the

left side of the road which gives a nice big arc. But so many of them make the decision to set up for this too late. This results in a last moment sweep from their central position across to the left and then they almost double back on themselves to get on the line they wanted in the first place, making the initial part of the arc much tighter than it needs to be and resulting in them needing more lean angle. Set yourself up early for the straightest approach to where you are going to turn the bike (if you are coming from a straight) or plan your exit from the turn coming up to put yourself in the best place to attack the next turn when there are a series of corners linked together.

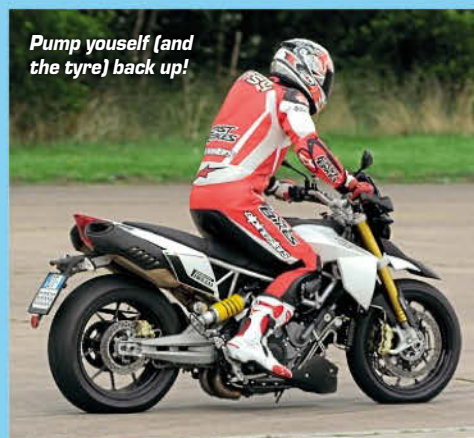
## FEELING FLAT?

**Q** I have recently returned to riding after a very long lay-off and one thing that terrifies me is the thought of having a front tyre blowout. Are tubeless tyres less prone to this and what should I do if I do get a front puncture?

**Frank, West Yorks**

**A** Interestingly, we have recently been working with the Police to try out what happens if a bike runs over a 'stinger' that's usually used to stop cars from getting away – and the answer is very little! We ran the bike over it at speeds from 20mph up to 70mph (as the rider got braver!) and each time the front tyre would instantly pick up three of the hollow spikes causing a fairly quick deflation of the front tyre. Instead of the expected blowout, there was enough time to get the bike stood up, slowed down (using a fair bit of back brake) and come to a stop in complete safety. The steering got heavier quite quickly but that feeling gave a good early warning that the tyre was

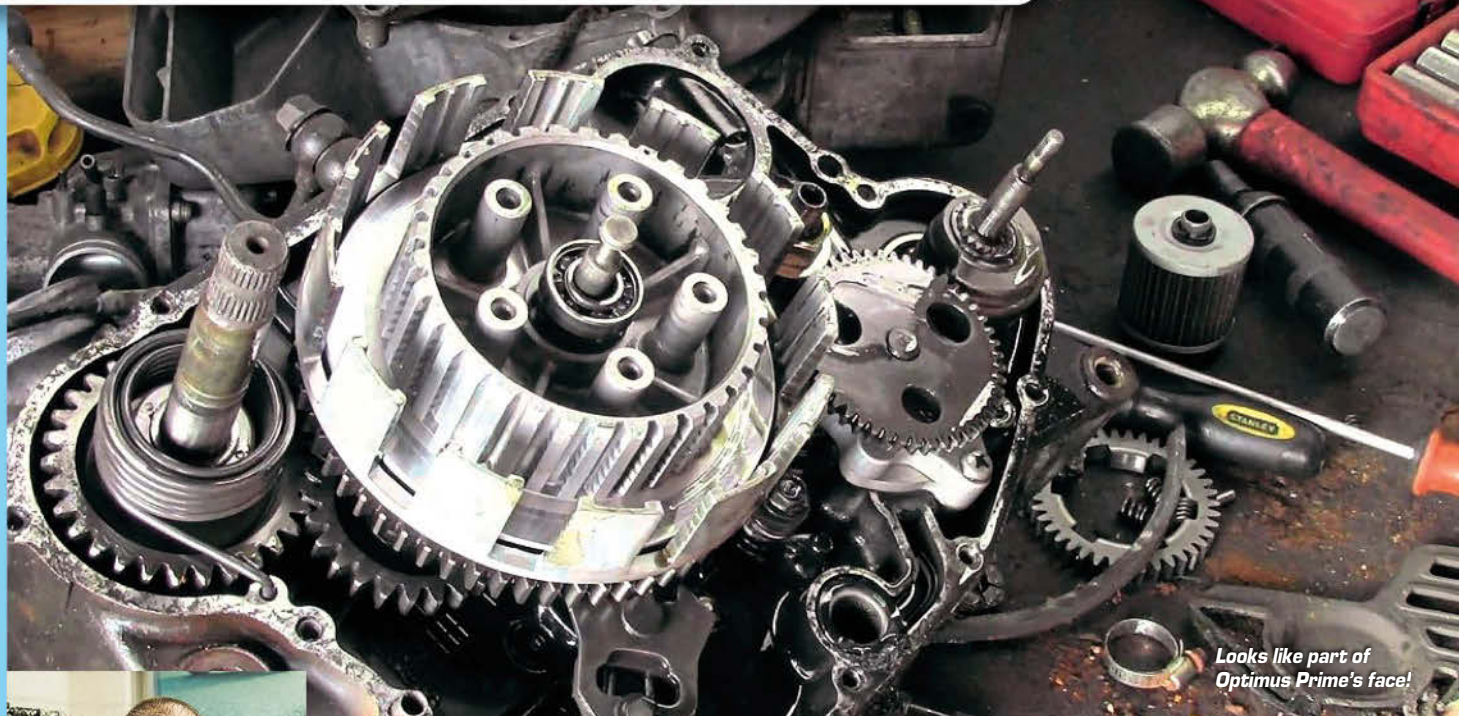
Pump yourself (and the tyre) back up!



going down. To experience that feeling, why not try taking 10-15 psi out of your front tyre and ride it for 100 yards or so to recognise the feeling. Just make sure you put the recommended pressure back in before you ride it properly...



# Technical



Looks like part of Optimus Prime's face!



## JHS RACING OWNER/BIG CHEESE

James Holland runs JHS Racing in Keynsham, and he is our go to guy whenever we need a bike looking at. JHS Racing was set up in the mid 1990s and has since expanded as its reputation has grown. The workshop deals with everything, from scooters to superbikes. Having built and worked on race Suzuki SVs and Triumph 675s James has a wealth of knowledge with these bikes, but elsewhere James' knowledge is as extensive as it gets. So from tyre fitting to MOTs, from dyno work to suspension, James really does do it all. And here he is, passing on his years in the business to Fast Bikes readers!



## CLUTCHES: NOT JUST A LEVER AND A BASKET

Do you know your slipper from a diaphragm clutch? Thought not, but James at JHS does! Clutch it up, clutch it in, let me begin...

**M**odern clutches are mint (that means very good for non-Bristolians – Ed) these days. A clutch is the main component that takes the power from the crankshaft and puts it through the gearbox and onto the rear wheel. It's the clutch that takes the hiding. It's constantly working, being loaded and unloaded every second when you accelerate/decelerate. Put simply, they are an item to transfer a force to the rear wheel.

There are obviously two primary options these days; wet and dry clutches. If you have the dry clutch set-up (certain Ducatis and full-on race bikes are the most common recipients of these), they're going to take a lot more maintenance and cost a lot more because the components are open to the elements, and, as the name suggests, dry. There's just some assembly lube when they're put together, but otherwise there's

no form of lubrication, so that means more friction.

That primeval Ducati noise so associated with these Italian bikes is the clutch plates rattling around in the basket, not the engine imploding. Well, mostly. Consequently, they wear plates out sooner, purely because there's no lubricant. Imagine having a clutch that's encased in oil or open – which one is going to wear the most? The dry clutch, and even more so when you've got a slipper clutch. The amount of bikes that come through the workshop for a service with such a set-up; the basket's worn out, the plates are worn out, the centre's worn out, and then you've got a bill of nigh-on £1,000. Even Ducati owners choke at that.

With a wet clutch, you don't generally get those issues, because the clutch is covered in oil; it's being cooled by oil, the oil is a shock absorber, it's a

lubricant to so many items. The latest generation Ducatis have dropped the famous dry clutch to keep the costs down and servicing issues to a minimum. Once upon a time, a Ducati service was £500-£600 a year. Now it's £250, and that's partly down to changing clutches.

Unless you're racing, or frequently abusing one on a trackday, a modern wet clutch should last an age. These days, a supersports bike has some sort of

Wrecked a few of these in our time!



CONTACT JHS RACING: TEL 0117 986 8844 EMAIL JHSRACING@LINEONE.NET WEB WWW.JHSRACING.CO.UK





basic slipper/anti-hop/back torque limiter clutch. They've got things like anti-judder plates in to take-off from the line without jerkiness, and generally they are well developed. You've got to go a long way to improve these clutches; be it plates, springs, baskets, or a whole aftermarket slipper clutch unit.

We're only talking about the 5 or 6 spring clutches in modern bikes, but you can get diaphragm clutches (like the original R1's), lock-up clutches (which drag bikes use), dual-plate clutches (where you have two fixed plates, so you can select a gear and have the clutch out).

A lot of race bikes use dry clutches because of the weight saving benefits, but they're out of the bike more than they're in. Also, everything is hydraulic, and that's easier when it's a dry option. If you've got a high spring load on a cable-fed clutch, the lever will feel very stiff and work your hand. A hydraulic clutch allows you to change the ratio and you can make it a very light action.

There aren't really any extra maintenance issues with hydraulic clutches, as it's not the clutch itself that is hydraulic – it's purely the mechanism. ZZR1400s, SV1000s, and big Ducatis – they're big clutches and all hydraulically operated. All the big stuff is.

If we take an everyday, middle-of-the-road bike (nothing fancy, nothing dull) you should be able to see 15,000-20,000 miles from a standard clutch, which ain't far off the expected life of that bike over a period. But like anything, if you use a clutch hard, it's going to wear out. A track bike (a common one, like the Fireblade, for example) is very good in standard form and you'd expect it to last a few seasons of trackday usage.

It's when we get into aftermarket slipper clutches that things change – big time. When the engine's not driving and the throttle is shut, the clutch will ride up a ramp against spring pressure and separate the plates, just like pulling the clutch in manually. The pressure plate is released and subsequently, drive is disengaged. There's a lot more work to do...

Accordingly, the maintenance and set-up of a slipper clutch is far greater. If you're using one on track regularly, you should be checking it every couple of trackdays. If you're racing with it, you should check it after every single race start, but they are very specialised and I wouldn't recommend just playing with them. Pretty much all aftermarket clutches come with individual set-up guidelines and instructions, so read them.

If you've got a brand-new bike, you're not going to be thinking about the clutch as it'll be taken care of during service intervals. People confuse signs of wear with components tiring. Things like cables can often




stretch and fail if abused, and the natural thing to do is adjust it on the lever. It'll go all sloppy, so replace it!

If it's slipping and the cable is in good condition, it may be that the plates are starting to wear out. But they might be wearing because something else is misadjusted. Clutch judder is a common problem. The plates move around in the basket. They generally go wrong because of plate/cable wear or the hydraulic fluid has dropped (because of a dodgy master cylinder) or the slave cylinder is leaking. Aftermarket plates are really good. Some make bold claims on what they do, but generally the material is harder

and grippier, and some increase the number of plates in the given space. It's all about surface area. A clutch works on surface area, otherwise they'd all be one plate clutches like a car – which has enough room.

Changing the springs changes the way the force is applied to the plates, and there's plenty of control on offer via different springs. The early R1s had a diaphragm clutch in them, which means they're either in or out, and there was a kit available to convert it to a five-spring clutch.

OEM baskets are usually cast. Aftermarket baskets range from billet aluminium to other even more exotic materials – billet is obviously stronger and works well with drag racing and other tuned bikes. You might just want to put more plates in because you've upped the engine's performance. 

## PROPER TOOLS

### ESSENTIAL WORKSHOP KIT



#### TOTM: BOXFORD G200

■ It's a universal grinder basically – a multi-angled puppy. It probably cost between £10,000 and £12,000 when new, but I picked it up from eBay for £350. I'm guessing it came out of an old Rolls Royce factory or something like that. I don't care, it's brilliant!

We use it for shims and cutting dogs on gears, for example. It's got a magnetic chuck on it so you can grind anything flat. We also have an attachment on here so we can hold cylindrical items, shafts, etc... And you don't have to be an engineer to use it properly.



If you don't know the difference between yokes and yolks, Dzus and Zeus, or suspension and suspenders – email the experts [letters@fastbikes.com](mailto:letters@fastbikes.com)





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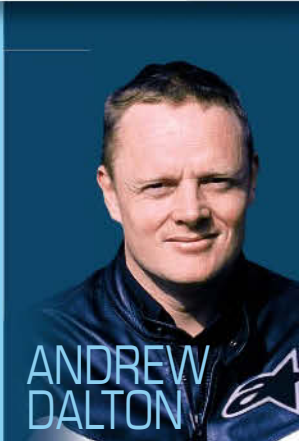
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# Legal

If you've been a naughty biker, you need some decent advice, get it from: [mail@whitedalton.co.uk](mailto:mail@whitedalton.co.uk)



ANDREW DALTON

## PENAL SERVITUDE PREVENTOR

The Fast Bikes Legal Clinic is compiled by Andrew Dalton, and his bike riding barristers and solicitors at White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors.

They deal with personal injury claims and their sister company, Motor Defence Team, deals with all the motoring offences. They know everything about bike law. Andrew is a former London motorbike courier turned barrister and solicitor, and we know he's good. All the White Dalton lawyers are qualified barristers, or solicitors, or both - and they all have full bike licences, too. They don't act for insurance companies or the prosecution. They are Britain's most specialist law practice, and if they don't know the answer to your question, there probably isn't one. Don't rely on the advice from your insurance appointed solicitor, get proper independent advice.

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[whitedalton.co.uk](http://whitedalton.co.uk)  
[motordefensesolicitors.co.uk](http://motordefensesolicitors.co.uk)



Don't rely on warning signs to get you round a bend...

## TIME FOR A SIGN?

Stacked it on a bend without any warning signs?

**Q** I was riding with a group of friends in the Peak District when due to road circumstances and a couple of lost overtaking spots, I got split up from my riding friends. I rode a bit faster than I normally would to catch up with them when I came to a sharp bend on a B-road. There were no chevrons, slow markings or warnings. I did not make the corner and got bundled along a dry stone wall. As a result of that I was seriously injured. I have tried to get

the help of Solicitors but no one wants to take on the case and no-one would tell me why. Can you?

**Name Withheld**

**A** I can, very easily. Your issue is that the sharp deviation surprised you and had you been warned you would no doubt say you would have moderated your riding style. Even if that were something you could prove, it still does not help you. The Highways

*Authority owes no duty to warn you as to the layout of the road. They have the power to put up warning signs, but no duty. You have a duty to ride with reasonable care, skill and observation, so you have no legal case against anyone. Most of us have overcooked corners, taken the wrong line or been fooled by a disappearing apex so I am not without sympathy, but I cannot offer you any legal remedy.*



# Chatter

## STAR LETTER

### MANX ADVENTURE

I have been reading for magazines for a few years and find your work a great read (and am very jealous of your jobs!). I am currently racing in the MRO Minitwin series and usually a front runner (apart from last week...) and I plan to race the Manx GP in the Newcomers B and Supertwin races this year, but am currently lacking support. As I race on a shoe string budget I thought it would be a great chance for readers who think they can't afford racing an inside view of a real budget racer taking on the famous TT circuit in exchange for support – or at least point me in the right direction as you know how hard it can be to get support. I would appreciate any help greatly and believe that this would make a great story for the magazine.

Russell Taylor, MRO Minitwin #12

Anyone want to help a budding ManxGP racer out? Get in touch with us and we'll pass your details on to Russell.

## WIN OXFORD

A pair of awesome new Oxford RP-4 gloves – worth £39.99 – for writing the Star Letter!

Cowhide upper with synthetic suede Aniline goatskin palm - Silicone grip fingers - Pre curved wrist, fingers and palm - External seam construction Anti abrasion Aramid lining Carbon fibre knuckle and finger guards - Moulded TPR retention strap Impact-absorbing padding. Available in S-2XL sizes.



Little and large!

## kiddi moto

### KID'S CORNER

#futrureracer Start them young, my son Oliver's 2nd birthday.

Josh Mann



### MIGHTY BRUCE?

Dear Fast Bikes, while watching the build up to this year's TT, I have one very important question. Is Bruce Anstey, TT legend, actually Howard Moon from the Mighty Boosh?

Patrick Hollins



Separated at birth?

Are you on crack, Patrick?

### RARE REAR

There's a lot going on in this photo...

Sasha Lark



### POCKET ROCKET

My NC30 nearly finished. Just paint now and how to style it.

James Wilkins



### BAG IT UP

How to pack your bags on a GSX-R 750 K5!

Tiago Baião



### ZEDANISM

You wont see many of these in this condition...my friend, Tamás'. It's gorgeous...

Jon Heppell



## AS SEEN ON TWITTER



@rickyrooster46

@fastbikesmag a quick blast before the rain today. My mate loves his R1!



@jad1boo Awesome week in the Isle of Man @fastbikesmag #snaefell #cregnybaa



@danmel69 @fastbikesmag my 8 year old asked to swap bikes at the weekend.





Want your greatest riding cock-up, triumph, or just the missus' naked form immortalised in these hallowed pages? Email [letters@fastbikesmag.com](mailto:letters@fastbikesmag.com)

## HOLIDAY CAPERS – NUMBER ONE

So this is one of the waiters at our resort in Crete. Anyone else think he looks like one of our own BSB winners, and now team boss?  
**Clifton Scoones, email**

*You're right, it's a young Rob Mac!*



Rock on, Tommy!

## HOLIDAY CAPERS – NUMBER TWO!

My girlfriend doesn't normally see my mag as I take it to work, but take her and it to Crete and I have to wait to read it (but I think you'd agree, they do look good together). I wouldn't mind, but she's only been out on my bike once so far!  
**Clifton Scoones, again!**

*Don't worry Clifton, it's worth the wait to keep her happy!*



## RC CUSTOMER...

Is Honda having a laugh? We've been waiting for a decent upgrade to the Fireblade for years, but what they come up with is a bike that costs ten times what a 'Blade does! £140,000 is a bonkers amount. I don't doubt that the parts justify the price, but I do doubt that Honda knows who its customers are.

**Tony, Croydon**



At least Honda has one happy customer...



## INSERT PUSSY JOKE HERE

My kitty enjoying the Fireblade spread!  
**Mike Mosley**

## LIVING THE DREAM

Yesterday a boyhood dream came true. I got a 'Blade!  
**Scott Brailey**



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## AS SEEN ON FACEBOOK

**Fast Bikes Magazine:** Yellow Ducatis – right or wrong? Discuss!

**Lee Wrigley:** I'd like a blue one. Something different.

**Malcolm James King:** Fine, as long as you remember that red ones go faster.



**Scott Vanderschaaf:** I like it.



**Phil Drummond:** What's not to love about that...



**Aiden Gillmore:** I love my yellow 748R!



**Chris Davies:** This.

**Matt Finch:** I saw a guy on a yellow 748 with yellow leathers once... he looked like he could be banana man.



**Andrew Scobie:** Yell!!!! ow ...

**Davie Weir:** For all you purists, yellow is actually the original racing colour of Ducati.



**Jules Winnfield:** I loved mine, despite being unreliable as hell.



**Nick Sainsbury:** Anything other than bananas is wrong in yellow.



**Gordon Clark:** I've gotta say red!



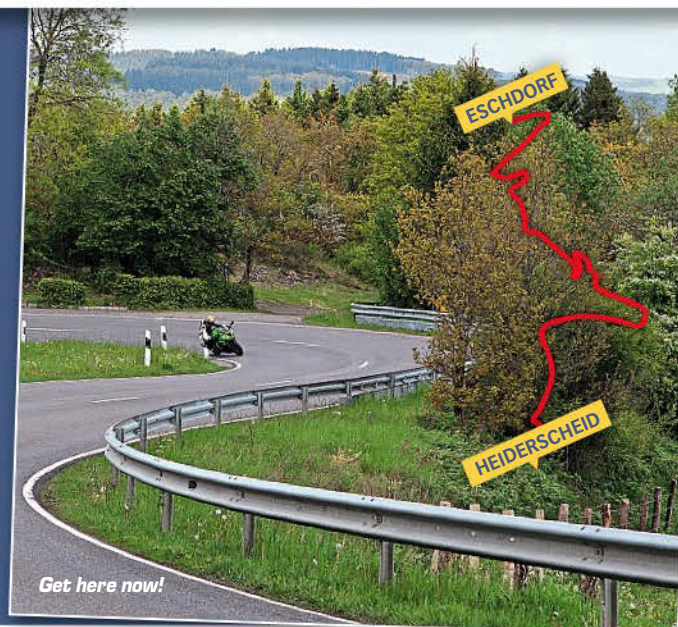
**Rob Bate:** Yellow and red can always be combined...



# Travel & Tracks

## GREAT LAUNCH ROADS: LUXEMBOURG

Last Spring, the good people of Luxembourg invited us to test ride its country! Wanting to show itself as more than just a tax haven, the tourist office wants people to come and visit the land, which turns out to be a beautiful place to ride a bike. There aren't millions of miles of roads to choose from, but from its limited stock there are a variety of cracking roads on offer. The landscape is all very pretty, the roads befit the richest country in Europe and the local authorities even have the nous to add double sets of crash barriers, so we don't get stuck under them in the event of an accident. Best roads to go for? There are a few that would make it onto any top-20 list of the best roads in Europe. The CR25 is a belter, a really technical road that follows a river from Wiltz to Kautenbach, but we've picked the CR12 from Heiderschied to Eschdorf, as it uses the topography of the country best, with some great sweepers on the roads leading up to the road, with it climbing up the hillside and through the trees in a style befitting the Duchy. With the country only about four hours away after you've got off the train or ferry, why not take advantage of the cheap petrol, great roads and welcoming hospitality?



## POSTCARD FROM: CORNWALL



Plus cider at the end of a ride!

I've just spent the last three days winding my way around Cornwall. I've been down there on holiday with the kids, and I always thought that there were enough roads in the county to justify slipping away one weekend – and I was right! You've got to go when it's quiet, though. At the start of June it was quiet for the Thursday, busier on the Friday and then mental on Saturday. Roads-wise, I enjoyed my afternoon on the Lizard, there are a few decent routes below Newquay and the bit of the A30 from Penzance to Land's End is great on a bike. Then Land's End to St Ives on the B3306 has some spectacular bits on it. Yes, I went down a load of tiny roads on my way, but by and large I was impressed with what I rode down on my Street Triple – the best bike I can imagine for that trip!

Andrew, Cheltenham

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Anything else? Well, you can turn the ride down into an event in itself. Either head through the Alps, the Massif Central, cross the Millau Bridge or go to the Gorge du Verdon on your way to the circuit. Roads should be quiet, but they're all packed with corners.

Didn't things get a bit wild in the day? Yeah, Russell Benney, the old boss of Phase One used to call it the Wild West, and as soon as the racing finishes fans would run to the

garages to nick anything that wasn't screwed down. We don't imagine it to be quite like this in the modern era, but it'll be an event full of booze and noise!

Go on then, I'm in. How much? A three day ticket with camping is €81. Factor in £150 each way to get there, add your ferry fee and you're looking at a £500 – if you're not too bothered what you throw down your neck!



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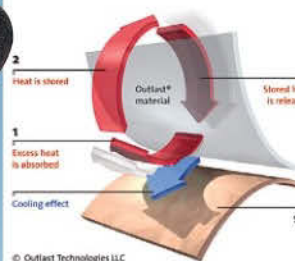
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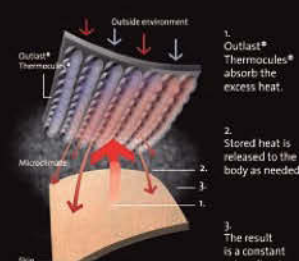
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## ROOTSY YAMAHA YZF-R1

TIME ON TEST:  
2 MONTHS

01312

ODOMETER  
MILES

BHP: NA  
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:  
TRACK TIME

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Hiding the keys so it stayed at home..."

I was fully expecting the R1 to ship out to Portugal, but I'm glad it didn't make it for two reasons. The first is that we managed to get an R1M for the biggest and most comprehensive test you'll read about anywhere in the world. And, secondly, it meant that my longtermers didn't get a two-day spanking around one of the best tracks in the world by a bunch of known abusers. Knowing how easy to ride it is, I know that it would have been one of the favourite bikes on test, meaning plenty of track miles added to the current total.

So the bike stayed at home and had an easy time of it. GB Racing stepped up to the plate and offered some crash protection to be fitted, which was a dream to install. It makes no sense at all to leave a bike open to the elements in a crash, especially one costing £15k, so the relatively small insurance policy of some crash protection is a sensible decision to make. £173.11 is the dent in your wallet, but letting the Tarmac grind through to the internals of your clutch or alternator is a lot more...

Fitting the protection was a ten minute job, which included a five minute tea break in between. It was the first time I've had to look at the build quality of the bike – and I'm impressed. For a start, the bolts that have come out are 12-point jobbies, which gives the (right) socket a lot more to grab on to – and they can take a lot more torque, too. It's a nice touch from Yamaha, and a sign that someone is listening somewhere...

I've been busy dialling in the settings for each of the four riding modes. That's another nice touch from Yamaha – you can customise the modes so you're not stuck with manufacturer settings. And once you've set one of your modes, it stays set and doesn't reset itself the moment it goes off (take note, KTM). I love the dash itself. There's so much info to go through, and while my thumb is still in training, getting used to the job dial on the right hand side, everything else is as sweet as a nut.

On the road, I'm not overly enamoured with the riding position. It



**Price from new:** £14,999  
**Insurance group:** 17

starts well with the nice, wide bars, but the interface with the tank and crotch feels a little bit clumsy while you're sat up plodding through town. At Llandow, where I managed to get my first laps in anger in, you shift your weight backwards more, so that connection is gone and the bike feels much better. But I've seen a few on the roads now, one even with a pillion, and given the tiny patch the passenger has to sit on my pain is nothing!

There are a lot of bits on order with Yamaha, and I've had a few interesting chats with Rich Austin of Austin Racing. I think it's his new favourite bike, and that means he's putting loads of effort into developing a pinging new system for it. This is only good news!





Touring time!



Small, but smart...



Nice plug!



## BENJAMIN BMW S 1000 RR SPORT

TIME ON TEST:  
2 MONTHS

04745 ODOMETER  
MILES

BHP: 188  
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:  
GET HOME?

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Looking forward to pounding the miles..."

As I write this, it's 2am in the morning and I'm in quite possibly the shabbiest and worst hotel room I've ever stayed in, situated within an industrial area in the far flung suburbs of Bordeaux. Me, and some friends, have just spent a fruitless two hours searching the concrete wilderness for something to eat, with zero success. As I can't sleep either, now is a good time to catch up on the BMW's month.

I hadn't noticed at first, but this bike was already wearing a pair of smart accessories when it arrived. While giving it a clean I clocked the 'HP' logo on the wheels, did some checking and discovered they are indeed an add-on item from the performance catalogue. They're lovely, but not so flash that they jump out at you. That, and I had no clue what the standard wheels looked like! They save a couple of kilos over stock, which is always welcome when it comes to unsprung weight loss, but neither do they break the bank at a more than acceptable £1,250. They're black forged aluminium items, and I rather like them.

Researching these wheels led me to BMW's book of accessories, and there's some lovely stuff in there. The carbon belly panel, airbox cover and mudguard look boss, but to me the bike will always feel a little naked without some decent crash protection on it, so I had a look at what BMW offered. I could only see the

left-hand side casing, but ordered both sides anyway. And while there, checked out and ordered the axle protectors so all corners would be covered, so to speak. A few days later the parcels arrived, and initially confusion ensued. I've used engine protection on every bike I've had for years, but these boxes were rather weeny. First out was the left-hand generator cover. It's not large, but nicely made and felt sturdy enough to take a whack. It took about a minute to fit, too. If you get the same for yours, the gap at the top is supposed to be there, it isn't meant to sit flush with the casing, so you're aware. Then I opened the box with the right-side protector in it, and at first was a bit disappointed. It is a beautifully made, smartly cut, but a tiny little thing. After fitting it, and having a look at all angles it will do what it's designed for, I'm sure. I suppose it's just because I'm used to engine case protection covering the entire case, this is just a different way of achieving the same goal, without losing the engine behind what's usually not an overly attractive product.

Next up were the axle-protectors, again smartly fashioned with a nice weight to them in your hand, like you've really bought something worthwhile. They were a cinch to fit and the BMW branded plugs, when popped in, finished off the job. So, while underwhelming in

one sense, the kit will do its job and I think, despite the size, it looks great. Plus, it's not overly expensive either – depending on your point of view.

But, back to the shitty Bordeaux hotel room, the one with three security guards and a bathroom door that's been repaired six times, all at around booting height. I'm here because the BMW is doing a long journey, for a feature you'll be able to read later in the year. I wanted the protection on before this, as it's pure hell being stuck in the middle of nowhere with a bike spewing oil due to a minor spill. I've been there before, and it sucks donkey balls. I also had some of Bridgestone's T30 Evo tyres fitted for the trip too, which I've heard excellent things about. Mileage and wet weather skills have been impressive going by the reports, and Leon Haslam can bang out 1m35s laps around Donington on them riding a stock Fireblade, so they'll do me just fine. Already we've done over 600 miles in a day and the BMW is purring along like a beauty, taking it all in her stride. In fact, the only thing getting me through this luxurious evening (not!), is the fact we should be heading into the mountains tomorrow, and therefore S 1000 RR bliss. Now, if you'll excuse me, I think the French fuzz have arrived to have a word with one of my temporary neighbours and I fancy me a bit of curtain twitching! 

Price from new:

£14,760

Insurance group: 17





*It was all going so well...*



## ROOTSY DUCATI PANIGALE 899

TIME ON TEST:  
2 MONTHS

01989

ODOMETER  
MILES

BHP: TBA  
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:  
NEW TYRES

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Getting her ready for a big day (or two) out"

**B**efore the petit Panigale got packed up and sent to Portimao to await its fate, it had a fortnight of commuting to get through first. It's an extravagant machine to be doing such a dutiful task, but no doubt some fellow owners (in the loosest sense when it comes to me) take their pride and joy in and out of their place of work when the sun's out, as well as take it for a trip out at the weekend. Well, the sun was out for almost two weeks straight and that's how nearly 2,000 miles have been clocked up on the dash.

And it's so much better at this lark than the bigger bike. I spent a few days on the 1299 in the Spring, and it was such hard work getting through towns, but the 899 is an absolute breeze. It's pretty good on the fuel, too. The fuel light comes on after 120 miles, then it goes off for a bit, then it comes on again at 135 miles when I start thinking about getting some juice. In goes £15's worth and another 135 miles is undertaken. It equates to just under 50mpg, and I'm not hanging about in the rush to get in to the best job in the world!

The braking's not right, so before it went to Portimao it'll get a coat of looking at back at Ducati HQ. The rear

suspension isn't offering the deft control that I've felt before, too. It feels like the bike moves onto an unscrubbed tyre, no matter that it's had plenty of miles in it and is warm by the time I get my race face on. It's that initial turn-in that I get this sensation from the rear, and I've stopped to make sure that the wheel bearings are A-OK and that the rear spindle nut is still as tight as it should be – it's that sort of feeling that get's my head thinking that it's a problem like this. I'm figuring it's something to do with the suspension, a lack of control on the compression stroke as I tip into a turn. We'll see.

So it's on with the extras. You'll have seen the Addiction bike this month already, and that's the sort of upgrades that gets me salivating. First off, it needs some crash protection, so that's been ordered up, and then next thing it needs is more noise. We've had 848s in the past that ring out a tremendous boom, and that's what I'm looting for here – even if the neighbours may not concur. Ducati like us to use kit from their own catalogue, and that could have caused issues a few years ago, but these days the pages are packed full of some really nice kit.



Price from new: £12,795  
Insurance group: 17

Against the opposition it's up against, I'm anticipating the 899 on the lowest step of the SBOTY ladder, but that really doesn't bother me. It's a stellar bike, worthy of its SBOTY participation and even better on the road.

I'm planning on riding it back through Spain to the boat, and spending two hours on it a day the prospect of another six or seven isn't filling me with dread. By the time that's all done, the tyres will need changing, and for something sticky given the season. Can't wait. **EB**





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First pass blues...



## CHARLIE TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675

TIME ON TEST:  
2 MONTHS (FBK302)

02376 ODOMETER  
MILES

BHP: 115  
GAIN: N/A

NEXT AIM:  
DYNO & RIDE

**THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN...** "Watching, listening and riding the 675 and enjoying every minute"

**T**his time last month I had exactly 1,700 miles on the 675's clock, and seeing that I have managed a further 700 miles this month is actually a bit of a surprise. June is a busy month for us here, a week at the TT and a further week in Portugal for SBOTY testing meant I only had two weeks with my long term ride, thus a 700 mileage score was pretty impressive.

Of course I should have taken the 675 with me to the island, with every passing bike I had the sinking feeling of a man on honeymoon on his own. But that's what happens with piss poor planning and a regular Easyjet service from my local airport for last minute decisions. My Triumph fix had to come from watching Lee Johnston getting an impressive 4th and 6th and a podium provided by Mr Guy Martin on the Smiths. My second trip of the month was much more rewarding as a riding experience and though again, I was bereft of my longterm, the 675R was available and what a bike that proved to be.

Making a direct comparison between the two would be unfair, I am yet to track my term, let alone unleash it at Portimao with the many hairpins, fast straights, undulations and blind corners that this awesome track provides. Though it did give me the opportunity to ride with a couple of the Triumph upgrades available including the CNC machined adjustable rear sets and the slip on Arrow can. I didn't really have the

time to play with the 20mm of lateral and vertical adjustment that the rears provide but I got the full effect of the Arrow Exhaust, especially when maxed out with Al onboard - we all stopped in our tracks in pit lane as the most awesome melody of power reverberated around the start finish straight. When he came in, Al stood back, pointed at the 675-R and stated how F'king awesome it was.

The 675R was perfect for Portimao, the improved seating position is shared between both the 675 and 675R models with a 10mm reduction in seat height designed by Triumph to "get the best out of you in track conditions". They both have lighter wheels than the previous model, have the same Bore (76mm), Stroke (49.58mm), wet slipper clutch and 6-Speed close ratio gearbox. As for 'That' sound, well they can both have that too, as again they share an enlarged through-airflow headstock so that the intake is at the highest pressurised position at the front of the bike, improved airflow provides the three pot snarl which listening to first hand is gold.

Of course there are differences with the R', hence an increase on the price tag of some £1,350 to boast a bike with Brembo Monobloc Calipers as opposed to the Nissin's on my staff ride. A full Ohlins set up in the forks and rear shock, carbon fibre a plenty and quick shifter. (Quite a package for the additional cash). All these things give the R that something 'more' for the track focussed



**Price from new:** £9,599  
**Insurance group:** 15

rider. For more part time track hacks like myself, well the 675 still has an acute aim in performance for these activities but with a welcome 'all rounder' feel for the road.

Riding the R' has given me much to look forward to this summer, I have the crash protection on order and will be adding to this from Triumph's catalogues and beyond. Suffice to say the Bridgestone R10's we used for SBOTY were incredible, sticky even when cold and after an 800 mile motorway based haul on the 899 Panigale from Portimao to Santander - Plymouth to Bath there was no sign of squaring off whatsoever. A great performance which may find a place on the 675 once the Pirelli SuperCorsa tyres have gone off. Though this again may take some time.

Thus more miles, and with all activities based in the UK for the coming months I will be able to talk 675 with an emphasis closer to home. Though what I do know is I have one hell of a bike here, sharing so many characteristics with the more race focussed model, and must make the most of it. On track, on road and wherever it can take me, much more next month. **EB**



Big Brother is watching...



## BENJAMIN MV AGUSTA F3 800

TIME ON TEST: 1 month | ODOMETER MILES: 00376 | BHP: 125 | GAIN: NA | NEXT AIM: First Service

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Going Ooooooo..."

So then, our first ever MV Agusta longterm machine has arrived at FB Towers, and boy am I excited! Over the coming months I'm very much looking forward to being able to tell you all about living with an MV, and with the BMW out of action (See the BMW's SBOTY page), it's come at the perfect time.

Not that we'll be going easy on it, as its very first action after it arrived was getting it on the dyno before being shipped off for two days of rinsing around Portimao.

A tough start for the F3 800 you may think, but wait, we're not completely mechanically crazy. One thing not well known about MV is how they build their engines and more specifically, how they are stress tested once put together by hand. The engine goes on a testing dyno, and for nearly forty-five minutes is stress tested at a range of different rpm figures, including redline, for a rather long period. Then it's slung into a chassis and set-up for the running-in process, which is essentially its final testing phase, the same as everyone else. No other

manufacturer does this to their engines, but MV's relatively small size allows them to properly test each motor. So, while I'm usually loathe against doing this kind of thing, it did get a beating early doors. I had, however, enlisted the help of Rootsy to drop a couple of hundred gentle miles on it before we did this. See, not complete animals!

I'd say 125bhp for a motor yet to loosen up is pretty nippy myself, about the same as a GSX-R750 as it happens. And it certainly feels fairly boisterous, everyone who rode it at Portimao fell in love with the little headbanger, as I am commuting on it each day, too. That's not to say it's completely perfect, but ask yourself, what love affair ever truly is?

It has proven to be thoroughly capable at the everyday grind though, even if the SBOTY tyres are completely trashed. I'll get around to putting new rubber on it soon, although as soon as the Bridgestone R10s warm up they're pretty epic on the grip scales. So while the sun is mostly out, they'll stay on.

We've also got some serious plans for this bike, which will see the BSB Tsingtao



MV squad throwing some nice bits at her each month, and help with some set-up. The front is so ludicrously light it almost makes you giggle insanely each time you turn it into a corner. A damper will certainly help, but some tweaking with the suspension can also aid or negate the need to drop a few hundred clams on a unit. But otherwise, we're going to make this bike seriously special, for something even more special we may have planned for this year's NEC show. Still TBC on that one, but the build will certainly be worth following nonetheless. So then, time to stick on a whole bunch more miles, get her first service done, add some bling, and then prove that going down the MV route is a viable (and seriously sexy) alternative these days. Can't wait!



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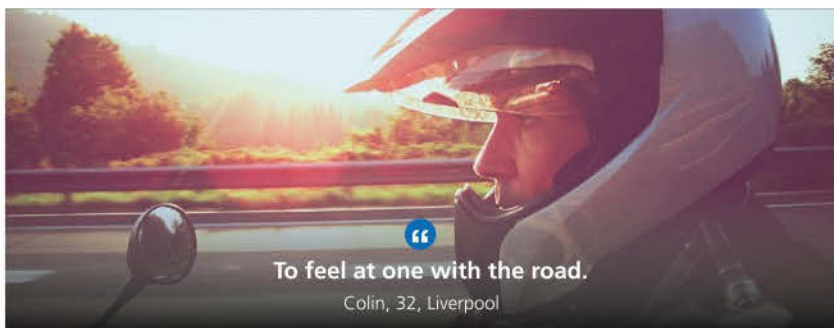


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## PETER SUZUKI GSX-R1000

TIME ON TEST:  
2 MONTHS (FBK304)

02430 ODOMETER  
MILES

BHP: NA  
GAIN: NA

NEXT AIM:  
More Riding!

THIS MONTH I HAVE MOSTLY BEEN... "Considering selling my K5!"

**W**ho said that a superbike wasn't practical? In many previous FB ramblings, Rootsy has given his opinion on the benefits of a sportsbike over more touring orientated machinery – and I have to say that I'm starting to agree with him.

The big Gixer has been smashing the commute to work in relative comfort while returning exceptional economy (190 miles to a tank), then allowing me to have some proper fun when I take the scenic route home. And when I do meet any queuing traffic, the narrow dimensions allow me to squeeze through gaps the V-Strom and Hayabusa could only dream about!

With all the previous longtermer Suzukis I've had, I've jumped back on my own bike (a GSX-R1000 K5) and thought that I'd still rather have that over the newer machinery; but this 2015 bike has seriously made me question whether it's time for an upgrade. The fuelling on the newer bike is so crisp that you never get that jerky reaction when opening a closed throttle, and the engine pulls cleanly through to the redline. I'd still say that mine feels faster, but I think this is down to the torque my bike puts out at lower revs – whereas you have to get the engine spinning for ballistic results on the new model.

Admittedly, this is due to the tighter regulations that manufacturers have to adhere to now, forcing them to push power and torque higher up the rev range so I can't blame Suzuki for that. They've also revised the chassis

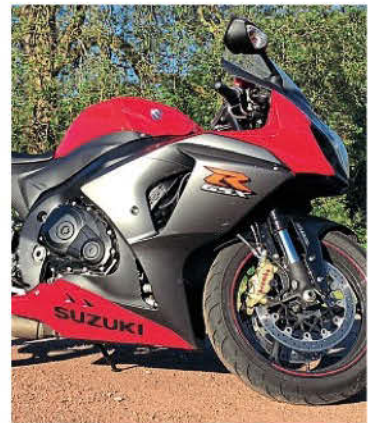
geometry and this has generated monumental rear grip, something Suzukis of old have been hampered with, allowing you to take serious liberties with the throttle in the corners.

The GSX-R is continuing to generate positive comments regarding its refreshed appearance and smart colour combination. I made the mistake of putting a picture up on my social media profile page and had my phone chiming every five minutes with someone new commenting on how good the new model looks – or how jealous they were! Little things have been addressed, like the levers being adorned in matt black along with the adjustable and grippy footpegs; small things, but they big difference – good effort Suzuki! The free Yoshi' R11 exhaust that comes with the 2015 model is a juicy cherry on an already tasty cake! Suzuki is currently offering zero per cent finance with a £1 deposit on most of their models, including the natty MotoGP replica GSX-R1000. Anyone in the market would be foolish to ignore the Suzuki range without a demo ride before making up their mind.

Oh, and I've bought a new lid this month. It's a carbon-fibre and red X-Lite Checa replica and it is so sweet. I got it from [motogear.co.uk](http://motogear.co.uk), it was delivered quickly and was well packaged. They stock everything motorbike related too, gloves, boots and so on, and you can find your nearest dealer through their website. The best part is it matches the GSX-R's colours nicely, a shame I'll have to give the bike back at some point! **FB**



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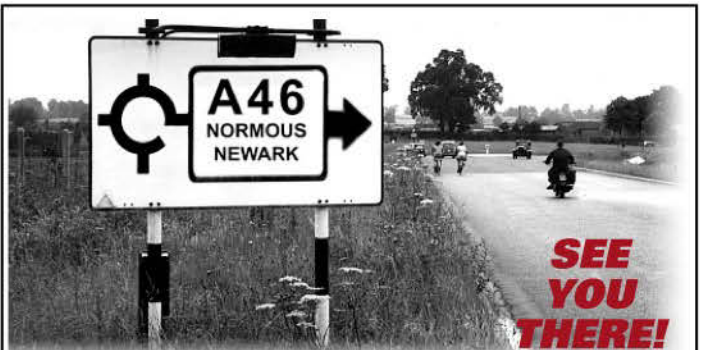
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PIC: YAMAHA

*Who loves ya, baby!*





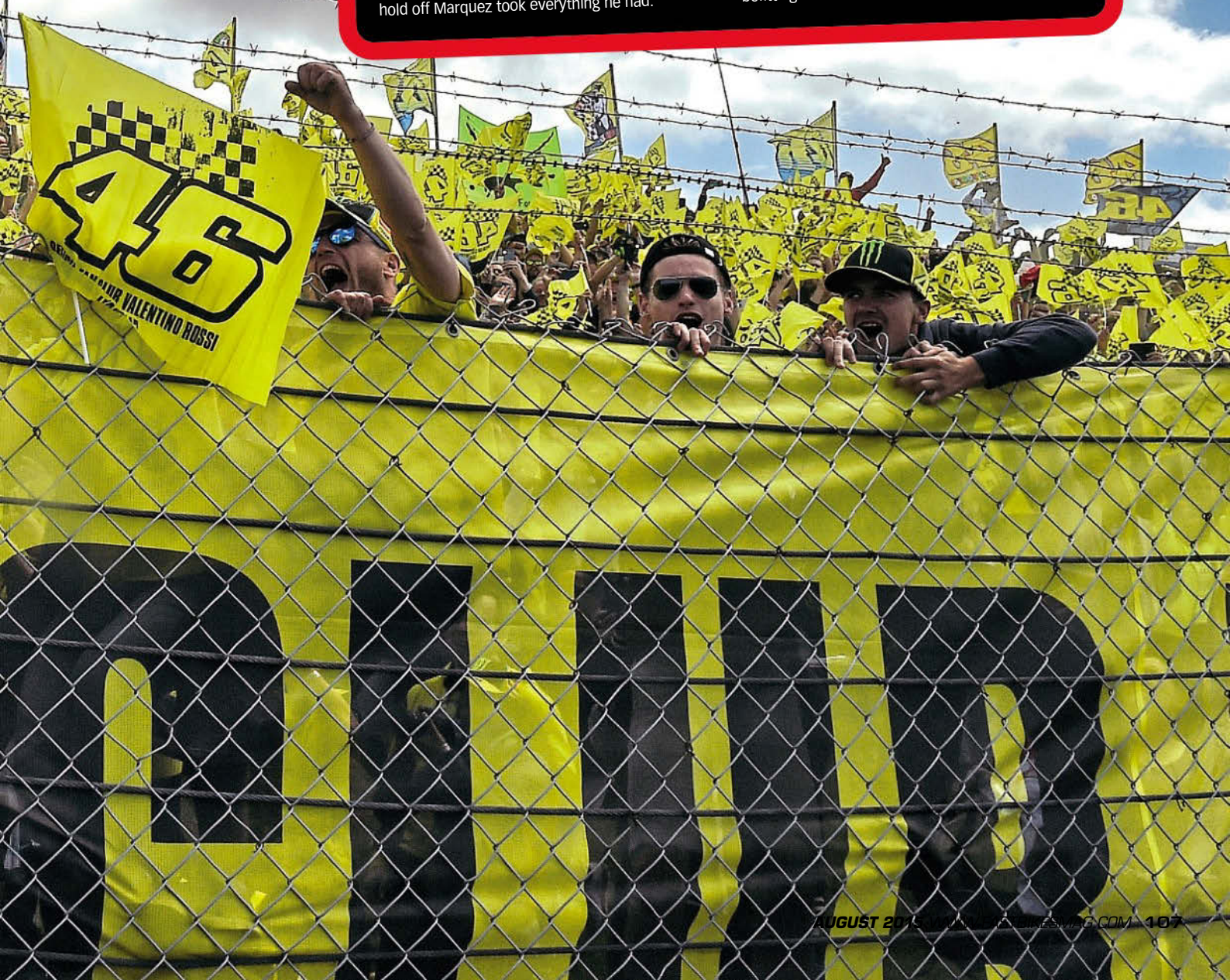
## CAN HE? WILL HE?

At Assen's very last Grand Prix to be held on a Saturday, the crowd truly went wild. And not just because for once we had a race where the battle for the lead wasn't measured in terms of Ice Ages, but due to the barnstorming last couple of laps and the inevitable controversy that Assen's chicane has induced over the decades. That Valentino Rossi won simply served to make it even more worthwhile for anyone there, or watching on telly. The race in itself wasn't classic for most of its duration, but it was bloody tense as Marc Marquez stalked Rossi. Valentino, after letting the Spaniard ahead for a couple of laps following a mistake, then shot away from him with two circulations remaining. With any other racer it would have been game over, but Marc produced an astonishing final lap that enabled him to put a move on Rossi come that deciding chicane. You know by now what happened – Marquez went for it, they touched, Rossi ran on and ended up crossing the finish line about a hundred yards ahead. Vale's experience won him that race, no doubt.

The immediate aftermath was more telling though, which leads us to ask, can he really do it? Can he take his tenth world title in 2015? When Rossi took off his lid, the 'old man', while very happy, looked haggard. Keeping up that pace to hold off Marquez took everything he had.

Marquez, by contrast, apart from being miffed, looked brand new. And this was at one of Rossi's favourite tracks; there are plenty coming up he's not a big fan of. Meanwhile, his most dangerous rival, Spanish George, had an off day at Assen given his recent form. But a poor day that still results in a podium finish is far more dangerous to Rossi's title aspirations than any bold move or incessant pressure that Marquez can put on him.

In fact, with Marquez so far behind in the points table, he could help fulfil Rossi's ambitions by getting in the way of Lorenzo as often as possible. We must also take into account his desire. Rossi's hasn't diminished one bit, more than ever before he wants that final achievement. We say final, as we would expect him to walk away from MotoGP if he becomes champion. Maybe the lure of top flight racing will keep him going longer, but leaving the sport on top is a must for a legend of his calibre, and with Marquez so far behind and Dani Pedrosa out of sorts we doubt he'll have a better chance of winning one ever again. Of course, we don't want him to walk away from bike racing, and Yamaha has that new R1 they need to stick up front in WSB. A dream perhaps, but a relevant one nonetheless, and leaving MotoGP as the greatest ever, as champion, then going to play in WSB for a while would be the perfect ending for us. One truly befitting the one, the only, the GOAT...





# Pit Pass

ULTIMATE ACCESS TO THE WORLD'S RACE PADDOCKS, RACERS & TEAMS



Once more unto the breach for Max, in Malaysia!

## WSB: THE MAX FACTOR

Misano's WSB round saw the very welcome return of Max Biaggi to the production racing series. Max is now the second legend to mark a comeback of sorts, after Troy Bayliss' efforts in Australia and Thailand at the start of the year. Biaggi's return has been mooted ever since he retired, although, like Bayliss, in some ways they've got very little to gain. Both went out at the top, as champions, and very few racers ever get to do that. Try and think of one apart from those two. Hard, isn't it? The sad fact is the majority of our most loved either can't cut it anymore, therefore fade away behind the new kids on the block, or have careers cut short by injury. Neither is a great way to end an illustrious career. Yet coming back for the odd race doesn't hurt, and seeing both those guys razzing around gives the championship a little boost at the same time. Biaggi will also be back at Sepang, no doubt to help bolster Aprilia's push into the Far East markets. Annoyingly for the WSB regulars, because he's a wild card it means he can have three engines per round, and unsurprisingly he was fastest all weekend through Misano's speed traps! As a matter of fact, he scared the life out of all his full time rivals when he dominated Friday's practice sessions. Yes, he'd done a bit of testing there, and had a fast bike, but he'd still been out of racing for a long while. Which was evident on both race starts, as Max got swallowed up and nearly taken out on both occasions. Yet he didn't let himself down with a pair of sixth place finishes, one right behind Leon Haslam, the other beating Jordi Torres. Considering his wealth of experience at Sepang, and a fast motor, he'll surely believe he can mix with them again. Which leads us to an idea – why not get a legend from very country to race in each WSB round? Allow them a bit of testing so they're not complete guff, then milk the publicity. It could certainly help get more shoes through the door and revive interest in stars from the past. We'd love to see that added to the mix. Now where's JT's number?

## RACING LINES

### Melandri Saga, Part 8

Just when it was getting really, really boring, Aprilia finally decided to end the misery that has been Marco Melandri's life since he stupidly let them talk him into returning to MotoGP. At last! As much as some may have been enjoying, or not, the moody Italian's fall from grace, it was getting painful. Expect him to turn up back in WSB at some point. In the meantime, Michael Laverty will be filling his GP shoes. Go, M-Lav!

### Hopper Hops In!

Former MotoGP star John Hopkins will finally be back in BSB, now that Jakub Smrz is out through injury. John endured a woeful 2014, by his standards, but by the time you read this we'll know how he got on racing Jakub's 1199 R Panigale. One thing's for sure, it adds another feather to BSB's bulging hat; another star, and another man who can cause an upset the pack if he and the Moto Rapido Ducati get on famously. Welcome back, John, get stuck in!

### Kyle Ryde

Now then, this young scamp is making all the right moves for an early call up to world championship action. He's been brilliant in British Supersport, and had that terrific wildcard podium at Donny against the world's best WSS racers. So it's no surprise that we're hearing his name being mentioned a lot in the WSB paddock. We'd say that's a perfect starting point for his global career, wouldn't you?

### New Gixer, new Focus?

Pity the poor Crescent Suzuki WSB team, they've been in the wars alright. While Alex Lowes is clearly trying his hardest to make the recalcitrant Suzuki and its problematic electronics work, teammate Randy de Puniet appears to have given up by looking at his results, which must be driving boss Paul Denning up the wall. A new bike next year will hopefully energise both the team and riders, as they certainly deserve some success for their massive efforts for, and loyalty to, Suzuki.

### Noyes Induced

American racer and former Moto2 pilot, Kenny Noyes was induced into a controlled coma following an accident at Aragon during a CEV round. Kenny is a decent bloke and a fine racer, so we wish him and his family all the best, and a recovery as speedy as he is.

### Bradl Out

Stefan Bradl has been replaced for the German GP, and maybe other races, by stand-in extraordinaire Claudio Corti. Bradl's time on the 'open' Yamaha M1 hasn't exactly shown off his talent, which goes to show that either the two-year-old M1 isn't up to the job on the spec' ECU, or Stefan's mind is elsewhere having been nerfed off a semi-factory Honda. Where he goes from here is anyone's guess, although his best chance of future success may lie elsewhere, in Moto2, or WSB perhaps. Unless he's happy continually making up the numbers downfield in the GP results tables, which we doubt.



## MOTOGP: MAKING A MARK?

Young Dutch charger Michael van der Mark came within a gnat's cock of making his MotoGP debut at Assen, before he had the rug whipped from under him. There's little doubt Dorna wants a flying Dutchman in the series, it's been bereft of one for many years after all. Their way of working is to try and ensure that most countries they visit have somebody to cheer for, regardless of whether or not a MotoGP call up is deserved or otherwise. Jack Miller is a perfect example, being promoted straight up from failing to win the Moto3 championship into the big league. With attendances at the Australian GP falling off a cliff since Casey Stoner's retirement, and the Phillip Island round being something of a jewel, action was required. So for the first time since Moto2's inception, the champion (Tito Rabat) didn't get promoted up, that spot was offered to Miller. He's brash, exciting and unafraid to speak his mind, nor put a few dodgy moves on folks, so fits Dorna's wish list. The same can be said for Frenchman Loriz Baz, he has also filled a baguette-sized hole left in the MotoGP grid since Randy de Puniet's departure. It certainly wasn't his WSB results that earned him the call up. As for Michael, a disagreement between the AB Cardion team and HRC over who would pay for crash damage scuppered the edam muncher's chances. This, even though HRC test rider Hiro Aoyama will fill in at Germany, which HRC will pick up the tab for? So it makes little sense why they wouldn't have covered MvdM in Assen, really, doesn't it? Michael, you're doing a great job in WSB, stick at it buddy!

*Boy's got skills!*



## RATE-A-RACE

**MotoGP / Assen – 10/10:** The first maximum score for a GP for a long time, as Rossi got the better of Marquez following a tense race-long duel, with a cracking and controversial finish. Gravy!

**WSB / Misano – 8/10:** Terrific first race saw lots of scraps and an all British podium. Race two wasn't quite as barnstorming, but seeing Biaggi back in action again was ace.

**WSS / Misano - 10/10:** The Sofuoglu Vs Cluzel year-long battle took an interesting twist in Italy, when the Turk fell off handing the Frenchie a bag full of points, and a chance at the title. This is the grudge match of the season, no doubt. Who's gonna win?

**BSB / Snetterton & Knockhill – 7/10:** BSB often rules the action roost, unless Shane Byrne is being amazing, which then results in a snoozefest, like at Snetterton. Knockhill was far livelier, but sometimes Shakey is just too good!



*Bird's men are flying...*




## LAY OFF WSB!

## Pit Shadow

■ Sometimes the attitude of people alarms me, especially those within the media, across all its various platforms. Worse still, in that groups seem to band together on an, er, bandwagon when they want to belittle or drag something down. Maybe it's a commonality of the UK media in general, to hack down things that are actually looking good, or to kick them in the gonads just when they need an lift.

In this instance, I'm talking about WSB and the irritating attitudes towards it. They say it's in dire need of help, that it's never been worse and I'm utterly incredulous as to how having so many of the top boys being British is a bad thing, from a British perspective? These are the people who aren't paying attention. Yes, Dorna has a vested interest in keeping the series a rung below MotoGP, we've covered that ground many times before. However, aside from Donington and Portimao, crowd figures (and global TV coverage) have jumped up quite nicely this season, did you know that? Of course not, why let facts get in the way of a good moan, after all. And all this despite the series being dominated by one man, the incredible Mr Jonathan Rea. Part of the blame for Donington's disappointing turnout I place firmly at the feet of all the naysayers. If you keeping banging on that something is rubbish, well, that's going to eventually sink in, even if it isn't true. Well done, I hope you're proud of yourselves. Luckily, even the previously empty Aragon round saw a modest surge of interest, Imola was busier than it has been for years, Assen similarly so, Thailand was rammed, Australia was up and Misano also pretty packed. All saw a step in the right direction, one that can be helped along should Dorna ship over a Nicky Hayden or similar from MotoGP next year.

As for all the British riders, what's the problem exactly? Brits have always been good racing superbikes, mostly because they haven't a chance in hell at one of the top MotoGP seats. It's not their fault no other riders from around the globe can currently match them in WSB at the moment. I don't remember anyone crying when GP was dominated by the Americans, then the Italians, then the Spanish. Just because WSB historically had a more eclectic mix of nationalities fighting at the front, doesn't mean at one point or another it hasn't been the preserve of those from just a couple of nations. It's also massively disrespectful towards the work the WSB Brits have put in over the years to earn a top ride. And, quite frankly, were I a racer I'd be far happier sitting on the podium in WSB, than finishing sixth or below in MotoGP for years on end, and justifying it by saying that it's the very best and hardest series. It's a pre-installed excuse that gets spat out time and again. I'm not talking about the privateer boys here, those poor sods are on a spanking to nothing in GP, but more those with slightly better bikes. The simple fact is they stay there, with the odd hope of a podium if others crash, because of the money. They get more for wages, clothing deals and so on. Which, of course, means their agents also earn a bigger wedge – it's all interconnected, and all born from selfish financial gain. They're kidding themselves if they think Honda is going to offer up a factory ride. I'd love someone to just for once be honest about this, but then, pigs might fly. Back to the WSB Brits, and the media jackals out there – sort it out! 



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After tips from Toprak, Kenan is now king of the wheelies!

# Turkish Delight

We sit down with multiple world supersport champ' Kenan Sofuoglu – and find there's more to the man than what we see on TV...

WORDS: BENJAMIN J KUBAS CRONIN PICS: KEL EDGE

Is there a more misunderstood rider in motorcycle racing than multiple world supersport champion Kenan Sofuoglu? He's a man never afraid to attack on track, and his rivals never seem to hold back when he beats them or stuffs it up the inside. We can all remember some crazy looking things he's executed on track, but we can also remember his dominance of the supersport class too. Never has there been a rider in the category with so much success, nor one so different from his rivals, which is maybe why the field struggles to connect with him. Kenan's devout application of his faith, meaning he doesn't like to be spayed with (nor will he drink) champagne on the rostrum sets him apart from the rest.

It's these, and other, differences that mark the man's character, and that separates him from the rest – and that's no bad thing. Racing needs characters, but also nice guys too. If you ever get the chance to sit down and talk to Kenan, you'll discover a very calmly spoken, and very giving individual; one who's endured a whole load of personal heartache in his career. Yet he's still going, still winning, still confounding his rivals and still making the headlines. A far cry from his beginning in Turkey, working in his dad's motorcycle shop, right?

"For me, bike racing started as my family had a motorcycle shop near Istanbul," said Kenan. "It was my dad's shop and my brothers and me were working there doing the servicing. Then they started racing in the Turkish championship. I started racing too, later on. However, back then in 2001 there was only four riders in the championships. Three Sofuoglu brothers and one other rider! In fact, we started the series in Turkey in 2000. 🇹🇷"



No-one tries harder than this not-so young Turk





“I'D RATHER GO TO A CLASS I COULD WIN, SO THAT MEANT SUPERSPORT...”

“I was about 17 years old when I started. I had never ridden a small bike, I began on a 600cc right away. So my career started on a supersport bike. My family decided someone must go to Europe, but it was not possible to go with all three brothers, so it was decided I would go as I was the youngest. So they sent me to Germany, although we had no options at first. Finally, we got in the Yamaha R6 Cup and I began when I was 18. It was the real start of my career. In Turkey we thought we were racing. We weren't racing at all though.”

So you discovered how fast everyone else was?

“In Germany it was crazy as they were so fast on my first go, and I wasn't even in the top 30, the level was so high. But incredibly I won the title by the end of the season! People were shocked as at first everyone in the paddock saw I could not ride a bike, and then by the end of the year I won six races. But I had made a podium early on. These strong results gave me the chance to race in the proper German championship. My first year I was second, which was incredible as I was able to win right away. That then gave me the

chance to ride in the European stock cup, and it was the first time I rode a 1,000cc bike – and I didn't like it a lot. I wanted to go back to supersport, but didn't get the chance until 2006 when I rode for Ten Kate Honda. I finished third in my first season, and then the next year my dream came true and I won the world championship.”

Which is where you burst into our view. But your time in WSB wasn't a success, following your first world title. Why was that?

“The Ten Kate superbike was a very good bike, as was the whole set-up, but the difficult thing was that in 2007 James Toseland won the title with the old Fireblade, and then we rode the new bike and that has never been really successful in WSB. Even in 2015 it is not a winning bike in WSB. Jonny Rea did a really good job, of course, but we have seen many good riders alongside him who couldn't ride the bike. Jonny was the only one who could always win on it. Ten Kate do an amazing job with what they have, their supersport bikes are incredible, but the new Fireblade really was more a road bike than a real racing bike. We can see how well Jonny is doing now on the

Kawasaki. Aprilia, Ducati, Kawasaki and so on are building a road bike, which makes a brilliant racing bike. But Honda builds bikes for normal people, this is why they cannot succeed in the superbikes, this is just my personal opinion.”

But more WSS success saw you move to Moto2, and initially you shocked everyone again by being very fast?

“Yes, Dorna gave me a nice opportunity to race Moto2 at the end of 2010, and they also wanted me there next year. I did my first two races and had strong results. I had no idea about the bike I was racing as there is a big difference between the Moto2 and supersport, and I didn't know Estoril circuit either. The bike was so stiff, a real racing bike, I had never used anything like it before. But those races went really well (he led most of the race at Estoril – Ed), we were very strong. But in 2011 things were not good. Before the first race I lost my father, and I had zero motivation in my life. He was the biggest thing in my world. After that I never had a good feeling with the bike. I was explaining to Suter (Moto2 chassis manufacturer) what I didn't like, but he would always choose what Marc Marquez wanted, he never listened to anyone else. In 2010 I was more happy, and those two races were great, but in 2011 I never managed to solve the chattering of the bike. I also understood I should be in the stronger teams for a better results. And then I broke my leg. I actually never enjoyed that year. Mid-season the next year Kawasaki asked me to come back to supersport. At the time I didn't want to, I was thinking of quitting my career. But at the same time I wanted to ride a bike I enjoyed so I chose to come back to supersport. Also, when I was in Moto2 I was 28 years old. All the other riders were under 20, it's a class mostly for people who come from Moto3 to get to MotoGP, so for young riders. I left it a little too late to make the step. But my dream was different, it was always to go out of Turkey and



There's been a fair share of these moments along the way...





On his way to another prize giving...

become world supersport champion. I am not a rider who can accept finishing in eighth or ninth place, I'd rather go to a class I can win and that meant supersport. So, I accepted I was a supersport rider and returned."

And into a huge fight with our own Sam Lowes, who still says you're the best he ever raced against.

"My fight against Sam was a great year for both of us. It was really nice, it reminded me of 2010. Sam was pushing me so hard to go faster and faster each race, he was so strong with the Yamaha. Also the last three or four races I fought with him, a couple of times I won, but always after the race I speak to him. I told him he deserved the title, it was his championship, he was stronger than us and his team did a great job. I really enjoyed racing with Sam, even when I finished second I had a lot of fun. We accepted each other; that we were both fast and some weekends he won, others I won, it was really nice. I advised him to go to Moto2 as he was young enough to go there, and he could promote a lot of riders from the UK to move to MotoGP in the future. I am so happy to see him racing in the front, and I was screaming at my home when I saw him on pole in Qatar! I think he may have been a little nervous and made a mistake, but now he is more flowing and I really hope by the end of the year he can win the title."

As do we, not that it'll be easy! But now you have a different type of rivalry with Jules Cluzel, probably the most antagonistic relationship in bike racing?

"It's different with Jules Cluzel, I have raced him for a couple of years and he has a very strong team in the MV Agusta factory squad. It is hard to fight with them, and Jules is very strong as a person and a rider. But, yes, we have a problem with him in Assen and Aragon. He complained too much that we attack him when racing, and I don't understand what he expects. Maybe he expects I should never attack him. He was 🍷

Race face on, take no prisoners...







One line, two bikes. This equation will never add up...

No chompers, ta!



always complaining. In Assen on the last lap, last corner, he passed me. I accepted that but then he made a mistake and missed his line. I was on the ideal line, I passed him back and when I did we touched. He then complained a lot about why I touched him. This was not nice, I don't understand his complaints too much. It's racing, of course I will attack him. We don't go there accepting to be second, if there is a chance we will take it. Over the last two races in Imola and Donington it looks like he has accepted it more, things are going good with him. Personally, what I think is that when you are racing hard with someone, like Sam, I like to be close to the rider. It is nice to have the big fight on the track, but I want to be friends out of the race in the paddock. With Jules coming around I am happier."

Although you're often misunderstood as someone who can take risks during a fight on track?

"I am one of the only Turkish riders, but because of my riding style people think I am a big fighter, but I am not like that. When I take off my helmet I am very different. So I fight in my job, but not in my personal life, I am happy I have a lot of friends in the paddock."

Do you think Jules has been affected by the number of breakdowns he's suffered this year, has that made your relationship worse?

"Well I know this myself from last year, when I had many breakdowns with the bike. The championship wasn't possible for me at all, I had several breakdowns in a row with the Indian team. So, yes, that makes a rider very unhappy when it is taken from your hands, so I can understand it may have made him sad. I speak with Jules about this, as a rider it can make you crazy in the head. In Thailand Jules deserved to win before his bike broke down. I told both him and his team this, as it was true. In Aragon we were fighting for the win together, but he had another problem. It is very disappointing for the rider, but this is racing. With me, now we have a good team and a good bike, but I do accept it has been hard for him to deal with."

Speaking of hardship, you raced at Imola even though you had a serious issue with your child. That must have been very hard?

"Maybe people who look from the outside wondered why I was racing. A few days before Imola we had a problem with our new baby. On the Tuesday he had an operation and at that time I was not going to race. I did not

want to race I just wanted to be with my family, I did not care about the championship. Even if we were going to lose him, I wanted to be there. But after the operation, he moved his fingers, the first movement he ever made. Then the next day he moved his leg, and I have never felt so happy before. A lot of people at home speak with me, tell me to go to my job. I still didn't want to but they assured me to go. So in the end I go, I arrive at the very last second and I leave the second after the race. I did not expect to win, I expected to be tenth or just get any points. When something like this is going on with a rider, it is not good for his riding. But incredibly I won and our baby gets a little better. By Donington he was more stable so I went there and got a good advantage. I did not expect again to win, my mind was still on our baby, but now with good points I maybe do not have to push as hard for the rest of the year."

And of course you're helping a stunning new rider, Toprak Razgatioglu, who's won every superstock 600 race this year. How do you pronounce that exactly?

"Ha, we just call him Toprak, it is much easier! He is so talented, and he is a showman too – he loves putting on a show. I have supported him for at least five years, he began racing before he was ten. I sent him to Germany to ride in the Yamaha Cup aged 14, then to the Red Bull Rookies and after a wildcard last season, this year in the superstock 600s. He has more talent than me.

I know he is very special. My goal is for him to first become supersport world champion in 2016. I have told Kawasaki my plan, which is to support him to become champion. I have already made my goals in racing, it is time for his goals to become real. I want us in the same team. If he beats me then that is fine, I will just be happy to be fighting with him on track. Kawasaki wanted him to go to stock 1000s, but he wants to be with me and I know he can be supersport world champion. After that, my ultimate goal, is to make him WSB champion. He doesn't care what he rides really, so long as he is with us and he is racing, that's all he wants to do. I could not win in WSB, but I truly believe he can and I will try my best to make sure this dream comes true," he concluded.

When we first spoke to Kenan he was deep in racing mode at Donington, then later on we spoke when he was holding the vigil at his child's bedside in hospital in Turkey. He spends every waking moment there when not racing, he's a truly devoted father and, from what we've gathered, a real gentleman to talk to who is nothing like the persona generated when his visor goes down. Yes, he may divide opinion, but his record speaks for itself and he was extremely generous in praise of our own Sam Lowes, and other rivals, which honestly isn't something we'd have credited him with before talking to him. With Toprak coming through the ranks, he may not be racing much longer either, so like him or loathe him, we'll enjoy Kenan's antics while we still can. **EB**

Will Sofuoglu's career peak with another title?





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# Clive Padgett

**H**i everyone, how are we all? We can't be bad really; the sun is shining, we're working on racing motorcycles and everything's cool. Last issue we'd just won the Superbike race at the TT, and though the rest of the week didn't quite match it we still got two more podiums, and we were happy with that.

It was unbelievable and fantastic to see Hutchy win those races though. If we weren't going to win, I wanted Ian to win. I think I may have been one of the first to him in the paddock to hug and congratulate him. For me it was almost the perfect result, which may sound strange because, of course, we want to win ourselves. But the whole week for me, with Bruce, Ian and John winning, it was great. Those are the guys who have done the TT with

us for years, so while some may say, hang on Clive, they're not in Padgett's colours, I'm still really happy for them, and that's genuine.

For us, and although you can't control the weather, with the tightened schedule it may have been a little bit much for Bruce and us, there wasn't much rest for anyone that week. In fact, when it was all getting a bit busy, a lovely Irish chap came up and told me that out of the last 36 races we'd entered at the TT, we'd won 12 of them. That's a 33 per cent hit rate, which is incredible, and I was told we got 28 podiums in those races, which is also incredible. And it's all down to our amazing bunch, from riders all the way down to whoever makes the tea.

I have heard some talk about the TT Zero race, and that some people don't count it as a 'real' TT race. Well, I'd like those that are saying this to try their hand at doing a near 120mph lap on those bikes! Just look at the technology on those things. I love revving an engine and getting a feel for a bike, but they are astonishingly tricky. They came over four years ago and lapped at 102mph, then the next year 109mph, last year at 117mph and in 2015 almost cracked 120mph. What other form of motorsport is making that kind of progress? This is taking minutes off previous lap times. Not seconds, minutes! Who knows how this kind of thing will impact on motorcycle racing, but it is making a difference to our everyday life. From cars and robots, many other aspects of life will be helped along by racing bikes like this. The technology may not just be suited to two wheels, but eventually it will help us with everything, that's my view.

Do I prefer to see and hear a superbike go past the finish? Yes, of course. But do I give Bruce and John lapping these 260kg machines at nearly 120mph the same kind of credit? Yes, of course I do for that too. It just being one lap means nothing, you won't accuse John of only winning two thirds of a Senior win as it was reduced to four laps, would you? Talking of John, just look at his pattern some years, he always manages to pull something out of the bag even if he's having a crap week, like when he beat Michael Dunlop last year. He's a top man.

But now the TT is over, we've got our Isle of Man hangover in full force. You're running on adrenaline, you're peaking, living on little sleep, nerves, lots of work in the tent, and so on. And then you come home, and everyone has a dull or low week. You have to ask yourself where you are and have a reality check. We had a win and two second places, and Bruce also beat the race record, which was amazing.

And then there was Dan Kneen, who was wonderful. He did his fastest ever Supersport, Superstock and Superbike laps, joining the 130mph club. For a first time with Padgetts, I think it's incredible he can go quicker in all three classes. It must mean our team is bringing something extra to the table for him, and I'm so pleased for the lad. Right now we're getting ready for the Southern 100 with Dan, and I can't wait. Plus we've got the Ulster coming up with Dan and Bruce, and then there's the small matter of the Classic TT. It never stops, but we'll never stop loving it either. Till next month!

*They may not have raced together in 2015, but Clive and John remain firm friends...*





# Gary Johnson

**S**o there I was, minding my own business, when this great big stone came smashing through my windscreen; it scared the crap out of me. Until this point, the opening TT Superbike race was going OK. I was running in fifth and in touch with the boys at the front. At the TT nowhere is slow, and you depend on your windscreen massively. A lap without a screen, with my neck flapping up and down like the Churchill dog, and I was ready to call it a day – oh yes.

But I'm not one for quitting, so I got that crazy thought out of my head and knuckled down, my neck reclined into my shoulders and I stuck my helmet flat on the tank. This improved my comfort level, but I could see naff all, and that's why it happened. Out of luck, out of talent and out of energy, I was marginally late in seeing a crucial turn-in point, having just got on the climb up the Mountain section. I clipped the outside banking and got ripped off my GB Moto Kawasaki ZX-10R. Bugger. Not the TT start I was hoping for, but the good news was the bike wasn't in too bad a state and I'd only put a few scuffs on my super tough RST leathers. Shortly after, the race got red flagged, so I picked the old girl up and rode her all the way back to the start line.

Things did get better. The very next day I was out on my Martrain Yamaha R6 and had a right good blast, taking the race lead initially and building a 2.5 second gap over Hutchy and Anstey. That was pretty sweet to see on my pitboard, even if I didn't get to hold the advantage for the entire race distance. Taking the chequered flag, I was ushered in to the winner's enclosure, having bagged third place. A win would have been sweeter, but you can't go shunning any podium, especially when you get free champers; we were fresh out at home, so that saved me a few bob down the offy.

The rest of the week was challenging, with a good number of bike problems. Teams work so hard to build you the best bike they can, but

*And it was all looking so good...*



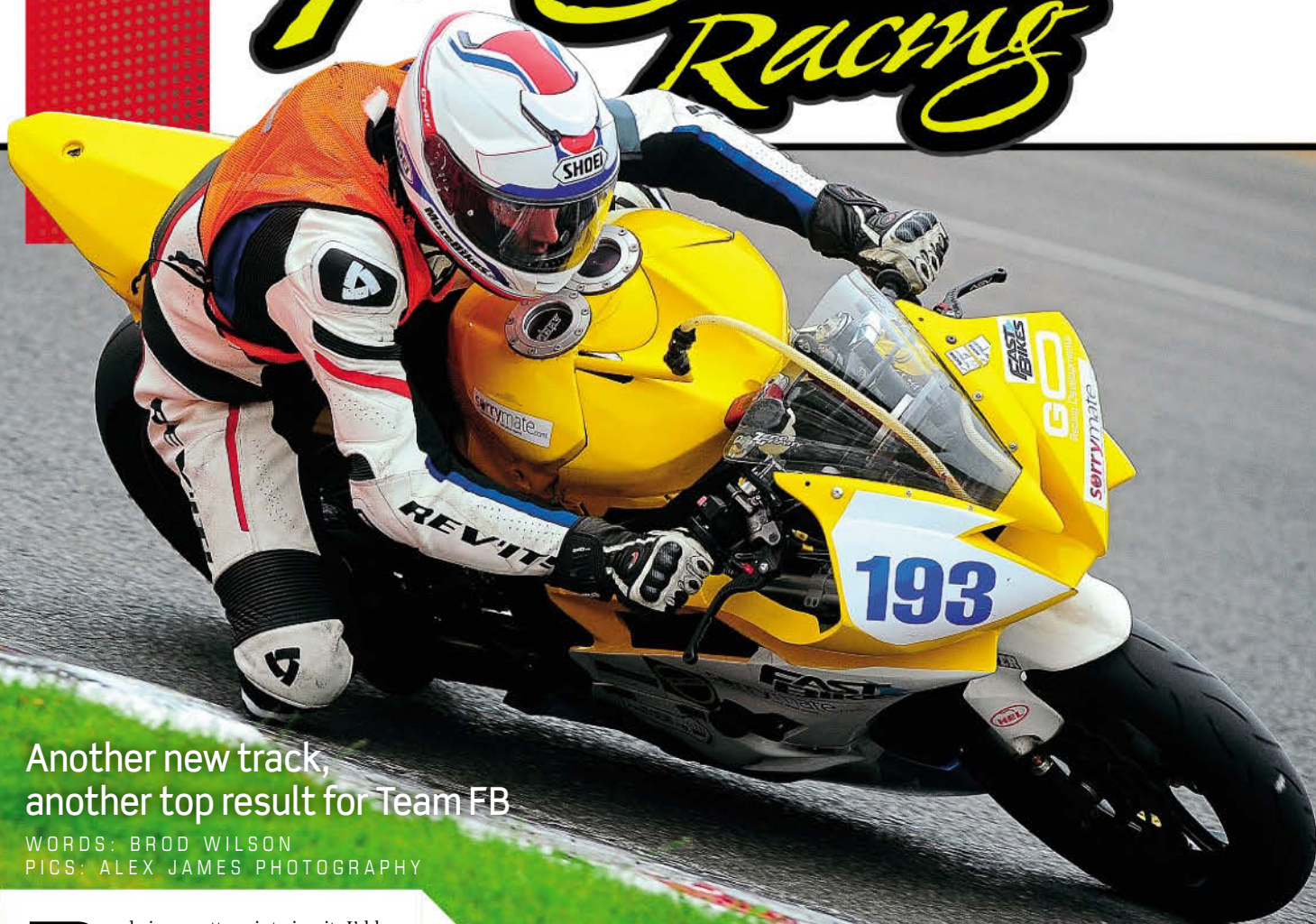
some gremlins spring up out of nowhere and knacker the job good and proper. I felt most for the WK/CF Moto boys. Marty, my lightweight contender, had been going so sweet, and I really thought we were on for the win. Sod's law, we tried the race engine in final practice and it developed a problem, so we had to switch back to the original practice engine for the race, and that went wrong too. Those guys have worked so hard to put an awesome package together, and I'm proper gutted it didn't go the distance. But, we'll be back and I'd put money on us reaching the top step.

Post TT, the pace of life slows down a bit. You've got a bit more time for yourself, but that doesn't mean I can slack off on my training or pile on the pounds. I'm clocking some big miles on my push bike and having a right blast tooting about the Lincolnshire Wolds. There are still a few big races to come before the close of the season, but my next outing's at Spa for the International Classic event. People go nuts for this Flemish event, and I'm really looking forward to riding with my mate Nick, from Monex Europe, on his Harris-framed Suzuki GSX1100 in the four hour endurance race. Hopefully we'll do alright, but regardless of where we finish I know we'll have a top laugh. I can't wait.





# Two Siblings Racing



## Another new track, another top result for Team FB

WORDS: BROD WILSON  
PICS: ALEX JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY

**B**rands is a pretty mint circuit. I'd been there to watch quite a few times, but round four of the No Limits Racing endurance championship was to be my first time to ride it. Lucky for me, the club had put on a test day for us to get out and bang some laps in around the tight and technical Indy track, which my team mate Ben Miller walked me around the night before practice. Paddock Hill looked mental, and I couldn't believe how steep the climb was up into Druids. I figured it was going to take a bit of learning, but with plenty of testing time the following day, I was soon finding my feet.



*He'll have his own 'Uccio' soon at this rate!*

With Bruce away getting his nails done, Ben and I were flying the flag for Team FB and we were hoping to continue our form and bag a top result. Ben looked pretty set for that, rounding off the practice day with low 51s, whilst I'd only just managed to get into the 56s. I wasn't too worried; in the race I always up my game. More importantly, I'd figured out how the track flowed and sorted out my gears.

Qualifying went pretty well the following morning, with Ben securing us a ninth place start overall, the second of the 600s, having got down into the 50s. I'd improved too, clocking a 53-flat, and I knew there was more to come. The plan was for Ben to start the race, and I'd switch with him an hour in. The bike was handling a treat, and we were pumped for having a proper go at things.

Ben got the race underway to a good start, and was maintaining our place as the second of the 600s, but then the Safety Car came out

and it saw us lose an entire lap on the leaders, who'd just passed the stationary car before it was deployed. That was a right bugger, and things didn't get much better when the car returned to the track having not long left it, costing us another lap to the leaders. Stood at the side of the track, it was frustrating to see. Unfortunately for one guy, a third crash saw the race red flagged having only been running for 30 minutes. With all the bikes held in Parc Ferme, the only thing the teams were able to do was refuel them. Being two laps down on the leaders by this point, the thinking caps were on to try and remedy the situation.

Our big strength with our bike is its huge tank, which can carry enough fuel for over 90 minutes between fill ups. We decided to try and take back the advantage this way, staying out for long stints, with me being lined up for the restart and the first hour and 15 minutes back in the saddle. If you've got it, flaunt it, that's our motto!



## RACING KNOWLEDGE: OIL

Keeping your engine's oil fresh is hugely important, according to Rock Oil's technical director Martyn Waterhouse...

"People are often told they need to change their bike's oil regularly, but they don't always fully understand why they need to. It's true that some oils are designed to last for thousands of miles between services, but when a motorcycle engine is exposed to track conditions and the punishment which comes with it, the oil is susceptible to a process called fuel dilution. It's well known that race engines don't burn all the fuel that's supplied to the motor, and not all of what's unburned escapes down the exhaust; some makes its way into the crankcases. This in turn dilutes your engine oil, thinning it out and compromising its wear protection potential. With our BSB teams, we

often analyse engine oils, post-racing, and see as much as 15 per cent fuel dilution. If the teams weren't changing the oil regularly, this dilution would possibly lead to engine damage and component fatigue. Of course, not everyone has the budget of a BSB team (which changes oil roughly every 3-5 hours), so we also produce heavier oils that are less affected by dilution. Of course, these result in more internal engine drag, so sap power, therefore racing lubricant selection is always a balancing act between power and protection. Another good reason to change your oil regularly on race bikes is because debris from the clutch and gearbox wear builds up over time



and has the potential to restrict essential oilways. After engine refreshes or the fitment of new MotoGP make gearboxes, you should also look to change your oil more regularly as there's often excess break-in wear


particulates remaining in the oil."

For more technical advice, or to make sure you choose the right oil for your motorcycle, you can contact the technical department at Rock Oil on 01925 636191.

*Looks like they're not talking, then...*



Feeling really up for it, my time on track went smoothly, and my laps times came tumbling down, clocking a 51.2s lap, much to my surprise, along with the team's! Brands just seemed to click, and I was loving my time out there. Better still, we were taking back the advantage rapidly, and by the time Ben switched to round off the race, we were back in the lead of the race. Ben got down to a 50.7 and managed to keep the R6 at this pace, which gave us an even bigger lead.

The whole team was buzzing and it felt epic when the bike crossed the line for that final time. And just a few hours earlier, we figured our perfect run of wins was going to be broken. So that makes it four out of four, and we're hoping for more. It's Silverstone next, where Bruce will be back on the bike with me. Neither of us have ridden the track, and we've not got a test before the round, so that'll be interesting. We'll just do our best and figure it as we go along; what else can you do? 



*On the way to victory!*

*Go Ben, Go!*



## ON THE GRID...

Each month we shine the spotlight on a racer who's caught our attention.

**Meet Ben Wooton**

Hailing from Little Hale in Lincolnshire, Ben Wooton is a regular racer in the No Limits Novice 600 championship, competing on a K9 GSX-R. At Brands Hatch, the 30-year-old builder bagged a season best 10th place, amongst two other top 20 positions in the popular category. "I'd really clicked with Brands by the end of the meeting," explained Ben. "The aim was to get down to 56 second laps, but I managed to break into the 53s, which was a real bonus. I'm new to racing, so I didn't expect to be finish so high up at my third ever race meeting. It's given me a confidence boost, which I hope to carry through into the next round of the championship."

*This is not the Ben you're looking for...*





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# Chaz Davies

**H**i there Fast Bikers, enjoying this awesome biking weather? We've had a bit of a mix over the last month, including our first ever flag-to-flag race where we pitted for wet tyres. That was at Portimao when it lashed it down with a few laps to go. The races in Portugal went OK; the first one was pretty decent, although I was struggling there with the front end, getting it to not fold on me and keep good lines. Race one, the temperatures were down and we had a shower towards the end. I thought I was in second place, but didn't realise Tom Sykes had done an extra lap on slicks. But a podium was good. In the second I was fourth, I think, but the temperature had come up again and I was unable to turn the bike. Coming off the brakes at maximum lean angle, I was losing the front, which was limiting me.

We're in the summer races now and I can't get rid of this tucking feeling. Now, it's quite normal to lose the front several times in a race, but it's currently happening every lap on a lot of corners, far more than normal. The positive is that I can feel it happen, so I can balance it and not overstep the mark, but the limit is too low. It's a geometry issue that has reared its head while searching for a stable package for race distance. To achieve that we've had to make sacrifices elsewhere, so this is an issue that's becoming more prevalent as the temperatures get higher. I can still feel it and ride it hard, but we need to make some more changes to combat it. We need to tread carefully so we don't compromise the other areas we've progressed in. I was pretty pissed off after Portimao, and during the Monday's test there after the race we didn't make any progress with it. It's one thing having a problem, but not fixing it after a full day's testing drives me mad. At least it worked a bit better at Misano, we understand the problem better, but before Italy I got to ride around the TT!

It was whirlwind visit. I got there on Wednesday and was back out on Thursday, but I think we had the best day of weather in the whole week. And what an atmosphere, I was buzzing! I could have done with more laps as I don't know the course apart from a bit of the mountain. It was special, one of the best experiences I've ever had on a bike. But tough, too. We had Milky Quayle as our guide, then Johnny Rea was behind him and as he lived there he knows where he was going. Then there was Guinters, then Sykes and then me. We weren't right up each other's bums, but with that distance to Milky it was hard to know what to do. We set off at a decent lick, and I couldn't see or judge him from that far back. So I spent the first couple of miles hanging on without knowing what was coming. I was going through corners getting on the brakes in third gear, but it was

“I CAN SEE WHY THE ISLE OF MAN IS THE BIGGEST BUZZ, AND WHY THE GUYS RACE THE TT EACH YEAR...”

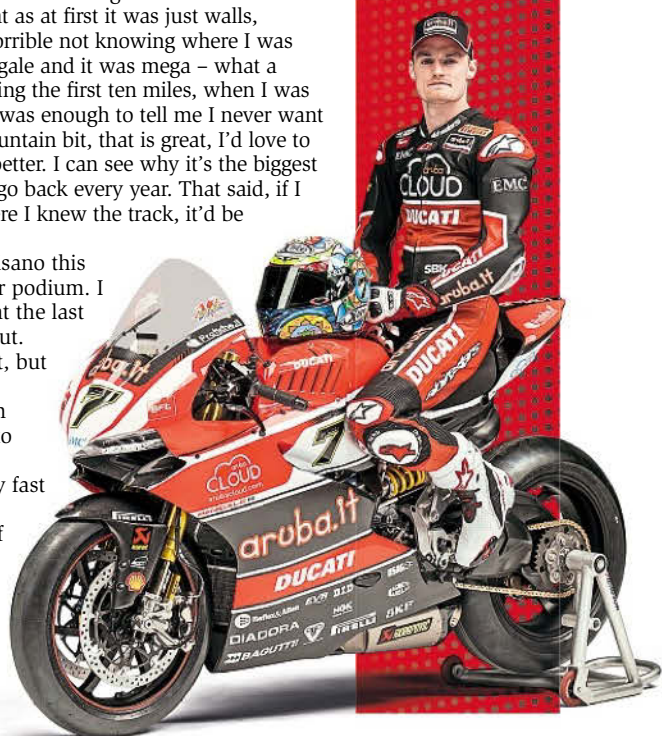


Chaz, about to head off down Bray Hill  
Pic: Tim Keeton

probably a flat out in fifth corner! It messed with me a bit. Tom was having the same issues too. In the end I thought sod it, I'll let them go or I'll be in a wall soon. It wasn't any better though, no clue where I was going at all.

But when I got to Ramsey and the Gooseneck I got into it a bit, so had a go and chucked it in. Then one of the travelling marshals came by and tapped his seat, so I tucked in behind him. We were way up over 170mph over the Mountain, rolling on and off through corners at 150mph, with a perfect blue sky as a background, it was amazing. I did whatever he did and it was awesome, I followed him all the way to the line. It gave me a real good sense of how cool it was, which is great as at first it was just walls, bumps, and genuinely horrible not knowing where I was going. I rode a 1299 Panigale and it was mega – what a fantastic experience. During the first ten miles, when I was concentrating so hard, it was enough to tell me I never want to race there. But the mountain bit, that is great, I'd love to know the whole course better. I can see why it's the biggest buzz, and why the boys go back every year. That said, if I ever got to the point where I knew the track, it'd be dangerous for me!

We did also race at Misano this month, and I got another podium. I did try a lunge at J-Rea at the last turn but it didn't work out. Race two wasn't brilliant, but decent points. And Max Biaggi was back, and I'm pretty sure he expected to win or podium at the minimum. He had a very fast Aprilia under him, but did well with a couple of sixth places. I saw him after and he said 'you guys go really fast now, huh?'. That's right, Max! See you at Sepang!







# Steve Parrish

**H**i everyone, last month we were halfway through the TT, but what about John McGuinness, eh! Me, James Whitham and Steve Plater were stood about all week discussing poor old John as he hadn't had a good week, that he'd probably call it a day and get himself a cockle picking job. And then after an hour and a half of sheer terror, he's got himself another year's contract! He was riding like a man possessed.

John doesn't like too much hard graft, but he worked out that if he scared the pants off himself he was going to win, and that will sort him out for another year. For me it was the perfect TT with Bruce Anstey winning, Ian Hutchinson taking three races and then the cherry on the cake with John's Senior victory. You couldn't have scripted it any better.

And a bunch of them did 132mph laps too, including Guy Martin, which was amazing. I know Hutchy had the exhaust issue in the Senior, but he made that mistake when he ran on and lost a load of time. It would have been closer, but I doubt he would have caught up John – McPint was really on it.

And how about the H2R going around? It'd be great if someone could race that, 206mph was a crazy speed to hit! James Hillier had never ridden it before, so when he zoomed off we were listening from the start and they're usually flat, but we heard him roll it off at the top of Bray Hill as he had no idea what it could do under him. Probably a sensible idea! But otherwise, it could possibly be raced in the Senior, as can the RCV road bike, c'mon someone do it please!

As you may have seen, I was racing at the World GP Legends meeting at Jerez and it was a great laugh. It was lovely of Steve Wheatman to lend all these bikes of his out, though we were under strict instructions to not really race them hard. Unfortunately my 680cc Suzuki RG seized a piston, but it was ridiculously hot. No matter how nice an old bike that is, I bloody hate the thing! It's horrible and uncomfortable, and even makes me look like I've got a big arse. I even led one of the races on it for half a lap, I was away and gone but as soon as I got on the straight everyone else, who were on 20 year younger machines,

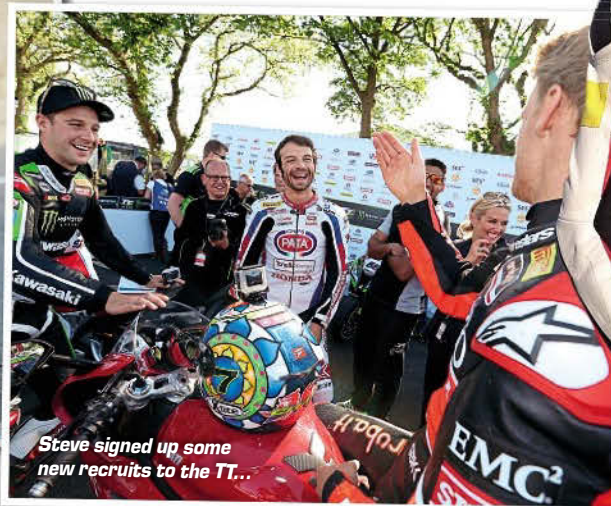
just came flying past at a vast rate of knots.

It was also great hanging out with the guys again, you wouldn't believe how fast we all were in the bar! So it was terrific, but the huge crowds didn't come as expected. I think that's because it was so hot. The locals aren't daft enough to sit outside on concrete stands in that heat. That's even more crazy than sitting on a bike in that heat with leathers on. Earlier in the year would be much better, or somewhere further north. It also needs more bikes, but where do you get them from? The only way is if someone builds some replicas, then we can fill the grids and have some spare parts. But when you're having to short-shift at 9,000rpm because there are no spare pistons, it can get a bit depressing. They should get a load of GSX-R600s that all the legends can rinse the shit out of, then use the 500s for parade and demo' laps. I did get to ride the HB RG500, which even though it was just five years newer than my 680, was so much better. And even that overheated every five minutes!

Over in MotoGP, well, what a smart move by Valentino Rossi at Assen! He outsmarted Marquez, and I bet you anything someone from Yamaha went and had a wander about that gravel trap at some point over the weekend to check it out. All he had to do was lean on Marquez so they touched, and that was his green light to run straight across. By the time Marquez looked up to see where Vale was, Rossi was already over the finishing line! He knew he'd been screwed right then. If he hadn't of touched him, Rossi would have been penalised, but he's a smart cookie. And MotoGP will be lost without the bloke, he's their greatest asset – and their biggest problem at the same time. I still think if he wins his tenth title he should hang the GP leathers up, I maintain that I'd never want to see someone like him ending his career through a silly injury, or because he's getting beaten. This year is his best chance, so let's hope he wraps up number ten!



Back in action, with Spaniard Miguel Neuvo in pursuit...



Steve signed up some new recruits to the TT...





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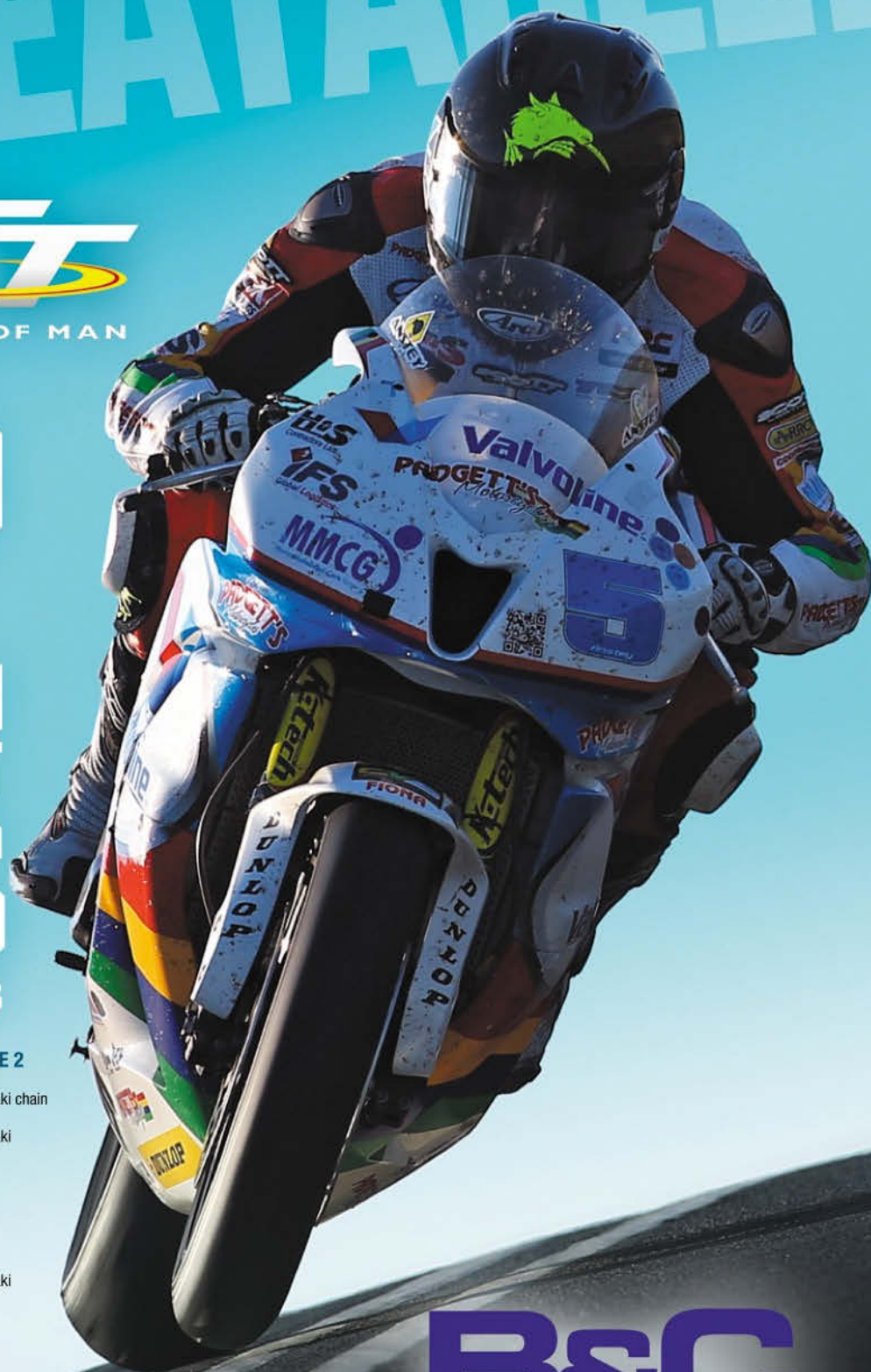
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**2nd Bruce Anstey**

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**3rd Gary Johnson**

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**3rd Guy Martin**

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